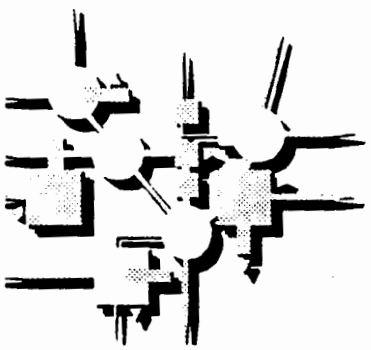
ALTERNATIVE MODELS OF INFORMATION PROVISION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AND INFORMATION GROUP AND THE EDUCATION RESOURCE AND INFORMATION PROJECT



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Abstract

This study examines the contribution made by two alternative service or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to the provision and delivery of information in South Africa. A brief analysis of the role of information in impacting on and/or reproducing social formations is undertaken to provide an understanding of the way in which information has been used in the South African context to repress transformation of the apartheid state. This discussion frames an investigation into ways in which NGOs have attempted to counter information control on the part of the apartheid regime by mediating information to their constituencies. The relationship between information, education and development is addressed, providing insight into the educational role which service organisations play in delivering an information service on the one hand, the information role they perform in providing an education service on the other, and the developmental role they assume in both instances. Particular attention is paid to the way in which these services relate to their users in the process of imparting information to them. In this regard the interface between NGOs and their users is investigated and the very nature of this interaction assessed.

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Chapter One
Introduction

1.1 Statement of the problem

Information inequity has long featured in South African society and is historically embodied in recently repealed legislation such as the Separate Amenities, Censorship and Public Safety Acts. It is also embedded in the legacy of an unequal and differential education system and policy. These pillars of apartheid South Africa have engendered extensive opposition to information control evidenced partly in the mushrooming of information services which have actively sought to provide their constituencies with appropriate information previously denied them. Numerous information services initially evolved as alternative structures to the many public libraries already in existence and, while not opposing the functioning of the latter, sought to enhance the flow of information in South Africa by providing specific types of information to their targeted, but not exclusive, user groups.

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate issues surrounding the provision and delivery of information by certain information services or service organisations to their constituencies. The investigation further aims to understand the ways in which these information services engage with their users so as to improve the delivery, mediation and utilisation of information for purposes of effecting reconstruction, development and transformation at various societal levels. The study thus investigates the role of these information services in building, strengthening and empowering mass organisations to improve the environments in which the latter operate. In

the context of this investigation, the concept of information services refers specifically to those service organisations which have a political and economic orientation and whose origins are linked to the development of the democratic movement. Those information services which do not have political agendas are not the focus of this study. The study thus concentrates on alternative as opposed to traditional library services and argues that in the South African context, whereas the former have contributed to the democratisation of information delivery, historically the latter have reinforced inequities in information provision. The distinction between the two categories of information services is captured in the following statement:

> alternative library and information structures fill a gap created by the limited nature of South African library services, both in terms of distribution and services...[these structures] were seen as emerging alternatives to the traditional library and information work system, both in terms of the siting of, and access to, service points, and as democratically-based library and information work models (Stilwell, 1994: 303-4).

Traditional library and information services which are also not a focus of this study, are only considered in this investigation in terms of their ideological role in reproducing the status quo of apartheid South Africa. In other words there is no intention to deliberate on the quality of or intended purpose of these services. Where used, the term democratic movement refers to the collective of historically defined extra-parliamentary labour, community-based and student groupings which fought for a free dispensation in South Africa.

1.2 Orientation of the study

The study has both a practical and theoretical orientation. Work performed

by the researcher within the resource centre field and more specifically with the International Labour Research and Information Group in designing an information system, provides the practical origins of the study. A particular factor which led to the investigation into the nature of information work performed by NGO-type information services was the growing interest among resource centres with how their information components related to education work performed either by themselves or others among the same constituencies. In the course of the investigation, factors which enhanced the focus of the study were:

current research developments into the integration of information, education and development work undertaken by the Library and Information Services Research Group of the National Education Policy Investigation and the Translis Coalition (Library & Information Services: Report of the NEPI Library and Information Services Research Group, 1992; Translis Coalition Policy Document, 1994).

a concern with the ways in which constituents learn, acquire information and generate knowledge, stimulated by the research into life-long and resource-based learning conducted by the Centre for Education Policy Development (ANC 1994b).

These issues are contained in a broad interest in the changing nature of information work. At the onset of the study, little documentation of the information role which service organisations perform had been undertaken. Since the start of the investigation, however, a fair amount of research has been published on the contribution made by the resource centre movement to the struggle for a free dispensation in South Africa. This research has been used in the thesis.

The theoretical underpinnings which frame the study, arise from a growing concern within the field of information work with the sociology of information. One of the central theoretical concerns underpinning the investigation is that regarding the sociology of information. Agre argues that the nature of information "can ultimately only be understood within a larger system of structural relationships and ideologies" (1995: 7). And given the relationship between information and knowledge (cf chapter two), Dant argues that "the sociology of knowledge ... can address and illuminate the relations of power obscured by the social processes surrounding knowledge because it suspends epistemological claims which attempt to separate knowledge production from other social processes" (1991: 228-9). Thus information has to be understood in a sociological context, i.e. in relation to the power relations, institutions and social fabric which it permeates. In other words, the sociological dimension of information potentially explains not only how information assumes meaning in different contexts, but also how it is mediated in and transmitted through society.

1.3 Sequence and scope of the study

The conceptual component of the study provides a framework within which the empirical component is discussed. It explores aspects of the sociology of information, including the paradigm shift in information science and an understanding of information work in developmental contexts.

The empirical component of the study is based on case studies of two service organisations which comprise an investigation into the appropriateness of their services in relation to user needs and of the way in

which they interact with their users in providing information to them. The investigation was limited to the information components of the organisations' work to ensure feasibility of the scope of the study. In other words, an investigation of the full range of services offered by the organisations such as their publications and research services was not attempted. The inquiry had the following objectives which were refined in the course of the investigation as discussed in chapter five. These are a study of:

1. the appropriateness of the 'current' ILRIG and ERIP services in relation to user needs; and
2. the ways in which ILRIG and ERIP identify user needs and the extent to which they address these.

An analysis of these objectives leads to the conclusion that the interface between service organisations and their users is necessarily premised on a high level of interaction which improves the quality and value of the services rendered.

Chapter Two

Some aspects of the sociology of information

2.1 Introduction

In exploring certain aspects of the sociology of information (cf chapter one), this chapter seeks an understanding of the concept of information. This conceptualisation is used as the basis upon which to view the way in which information is linked to consciousness and ideology in order to comprehend firstly the milieu in which service organisations function, and secondly the ways in which information and education based programmes intervene to transform socio-economic conditions. The chapter thus proceeds from a conceptualisation of information, to a consideration of various philosophical contributions to the relationship between information and ideology. This framework is used to describe and analyse South Africa's legacy of information deprivation and control which in turn provides a context within which to view struggles of resistance and the emergence of service organisations considered in chapter three. The related issues of the production of meaning and the construction of knowledge are debated since they enrich the discussion of how people assimilate and impart information. These issues manifest themselves in the work of the cases researched and the methodological approaches adopted in this investigation as discussed in chapter four. Finally, the relationships between information, education and development are sketched at a conceptual level, again to premise discussions of service organisation methodology as outlined in chapter three.

2.2 Seeking a conceptual understanding of information

2.2.1 Conceptualising rather than defining information

Information permeates all level of society and is transmitted by numerous agencies through a wide range of channels. As Robert Fairthorne notes, the term is used "for an amorphous mass of ill-defined different activities and phenomena" (1967: 710). Miles further argues that "all human labour involves information-processing; and ... all commodities produced by the economy embody and provide information" (1990: 8) These claims suggest that it may be near impossible to define information in precise terms. However, the purpose of this chapter is not to define information, but rather to understand the role it assumes in social contexts. This will enable greater insight into the importance of information in a developmental setting such as South Africa's.

In order to undertake a discussion of the sociological nature of information, it is necessary to attempt to clarify its conceptual meaning. Thus, rather than trying to define the phenomenon, conceptual clarification is being sought. To distinguish between defining and conceptualising, Belkin explains that a definition presumably says what the item defined is, whereas a concept is a way of looking at or interpreting the phenomenon (1977). By accepting the idea of conceptualising information, it becomes possible to search for a useful concept rather than a universally true definition of information.

2.2.2 Information and knowledge

In attempting to understand the nature of information, theorists have tended

to link information to knowledge. Brookes argues that "knowledge is a summation of many bits of information which have been organised into some sort of coherent entity" (1975: 48). Wersig on the other hand, points out that since knowledge is always "in a state of flux" it is near impossible to determine a "state of knowledge" and on this basis, dismisses Brookes's concept of information (Smith, 1982: 75). He argues instead, as do Yovits and Whittemore (1973: 222), that information reduces uncertainty, a quality which constitutes its definitiveness. Although Wersig's point of contention that knowledge is in a constant state of flux is valid, there is no doubt that information does have a direct relationship with knowledge and impacts upon people's knowledge bases. Belkin supports this premise in proposing that information is "the structure of any text which is capable of changing the image structure of some recipient" (1977: 201).

While these arguments, especially that of Belkin's, make strides in conceptualising information and drawing an associational relationship with knowledge, the debates have occurred within the framework of strengthening or moulding what Dervin calls a "normative view" of information. The core assumption of this view is that "information exists independently of human action and that its value lies in describing reality and therefore in reducing uncertainty about reality" (1977: 19). This means that conceptualisation has sometimes occurred in isolation of a broader, more holistic understanding of the sociology of information.

2.2.3 The situationality of information

The debate about a conceptual understanding of information has been significantly enriched through recent developments in the field of

information science. These developments signal a paradigm shift through which a more advanced conceptualisation of the nature of information is being uncovered. Dervin and Nilan (1986) document aspects of the shift noting changes in approaches to and ways of viewing information, information need and users. They explain that the traditional, normative paradigm views information as objective, "as something that has constant meaning and some element of absolute correspondence to reality", while what they call the "alternative" paradigm, "posits information as something constructed by human beings" (1986: 16). In the latter view, information only assumes value and significance in its application to a social setting. Hence Belkin's view of information as "that which is capable of transforming image structures", falls within this paradigm. The alternative approach then would speak of the "situationality" of information: the fact that information needs are generated in and thus linked to situational contexts.

King and Palmour remark that we often tend to think of information "in terms of information products and services rather than the information conveyed or the use that is made of it" (1980: 68). In developing this idea of the use-value of information, they comment that information must constitute information to the user since "messages may be information to one person but not another because of language barriers or lack of interest or understanding, such as with mathematical symbols or chemical compounds" (King & Palmour, 1981: 68). As Krikelas says, information is determined according to use. He adds that "[w]hat constitutes information is left to the judgement of the seeker" (1983: 6-7).

Furthermore, King and Palmour argue that "[t]he use of information is a means to the end and not the end in itself. The value is derived from the

many ultimate consequences of information use" (1981: 79). Again, this underscores the point that information assumes importance only in relation to the demand for it. It ought not to be assumed that "information has value in its own right" (Dervin, 1977: 25). In other words, information is not a fetish nor an end in itself but, when appropriate, merely a means towards improving and/or transforming environments of use and the consciousnesses of users.

Childers and Post seem trapped in the notion of information being valuable irrespective of the need for it. They argue that "the disadvantaged individual needs large remedial doses of information in order to bring him up to 'information par' with the rest of society" (1975: 35). While information impoverishment and misinformation are features of all stratified societies in which there are relations of domination and power struggles, information inequality is not merely a quantitative but also a qualitative social issue. Information inequality is not something which can only be redressed by 'equating' the level of information provision to bring impoverished groups up to par with more privileged sectors. This unlocking and redistribution of resources would certainly constitute a meaningful, although superficial measure to correct imbalances. Rather, the fundamental issues of who controls and produces information; the use-value of the information; the way in which delivery occurs as well as the interests this serves; and the type and format of the information being made available, will have to be addressed in resolving the problem of information imbalances and the development of appropriate information services.

Implicit in the above argument is the fact that people not only seek and assimilate information, they also create or produce information (King &

Palmour, 1981: 68; Dervin, 1977: 21). This assertion has interesting implications for those active in the information sphere: given that information derives use-value in its adoption by an individual in a particular situation, and given that information means different things to different people, it follows that information is assimilated and possibly acquired in different ways. The fact that people create information means that the information environment is not a closed system, but one which is constantly developing and changing.

Dervin best expounds this dynamic information environment idea. She proposes that a distinction be made between "objective" and "subjective" information. The former "describes reality, the innate structure or pattern of reality"; the latter is "defined as ideas, the structures or pictures imputed to reality by people" (1977: 22). This distinction supports the view that information is assimilated in different ways by different people and further underlines the fact that "information can be whatever an individual finds informing" (Dervin, 1977: 22). Hence information becomes situational and not merely 'objective' as is traditionally the view held. This model, says Dervin, "moves our attention away from 'objective' information, toward assessing the 'cognitive maps or pictures' of an individual" (1977: 22).

In Dervin's model, 'objective information' is called information1, and "refers to external reality"; 'subjective information is called information2 and "refers to internal reality". She argues that information1 and information2 are linked by an individual through some kinds of behaviour which are "in themselves legitimate informational inputs: information3". It is not only differences in the way people assimilate information i.e. differences in behaviour - information3 - that leads to different realities - information2 - it is these

different realities to begin with that generate different needs, search for different information - information1 - and cause different behaviour (Dervin, 1977: 22-23).

The difficulty with Dervin's concept of "objective, external" reality is: to what extent and from what vantage point is any reality "objective" and "external"? By virtue of the articulation between information1 and information2, individuals interface with society, with what Dervin calls external reality. Thus they are not merely passive subjects in the context of a larger picture in which external realities are static. Their subjectivity is always balanced or counter-balanced by their agency or their capacity to impact upon and transform realities which are thus constantly changing. Agency assumes greater or lesser significance in different contexts since it is influenced by a wide range of variables: audience, voice, power, available channels, and group dynamic, to mention but a few. The point is that while Dervin helps us distinguish between different types of information, we cannot lose sight of the subtle nature of information or of a situational and contextual understanding of information which she herself emphasises. The terminological difficulty with her model is that at the same time as challenging the notion of 'objective information' as espoused in the traditional paradigm, Dervin uses the very concept to denote a particular kind of information. This leads to confusion and begs the question: what, indeed, constitutes 'objective' information? This issue is addressed in greater detail in the following discussion of the relationship between information and ideology.

2.3 Information and ideology

The link between information and ideology is explored here as a means of understanding the prominence and indeed the value which information assumes in a context of power struggles. The intention here is not to discuss the relation between ideology and other social 'structures' such as the political and economic spheres. Instead, it is to probe the issue of the 'situationality' of information which an understanding of ideology deepens, and is framed by a 'systems' rather than a mechanical or deterministic approach. The works of Althusser and Gramsci are considered in some detail as their contributions provide a theoretical framework within which to discuss some aspects of the sociology of information. Both these theoreticians have produced influential and foundational works on ideology and the implicit role of information in social formations. The rationale then for including the discussion on ideology is that the works of Gramsci and Althusser promote critical understandings of how information has been used to advance both dominant relations of power by dominant social groupings and the struggles of the oppressed in efforts to overthrow repressive power relations.

2.3.1 Althusser's contribution

The Contemporary Cultural Studies Unit (CCSU) which was formed at the University of Natal to address issues of 'popular culture', explain that the concept of ideology, although in the lexicon since the French ideologues of the eighteenth century, came into greater use post First World War to explain "how both the immanent laws of development as well as the revolutionary potential of the workers came to be neutralised" through

capitalist control (Tomaselli, 1988: 16). Their commentary on the contributions of Georg Lukacs, The Frankfurt School and Adorno and Habermas provide a framework within which to view the 'revolutionary' work of Althusser in the field. Althusser disagreed with the conflation of ideology and false consciousness proposing that for individuals, there is an integration between the world "out there" and their own internal perspectives or the world "in here" (Tomaselli, 1988: 16). The links which this has with Dervin's information model will be explored later in this chapter. Althusser argued that consciousness (ways of seeing, interpreting and understanding reality) arise in ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) - such as the family, schools, media and the church - and is perpetuated or reinforced by their practices thus reproducing a society's dominant social relations. ISAs function alongside repressive state apparatuses (RSAs) - such as the police and courts to reproduce social systems.

Althusser's contention was that individuals are socialised through the ISAs and RSAs to assume particular "divided" roles expressed in a series of "I's", to occupy places in a series of social relationships. He further argued that in a technologically advanced society, the media assumes predominance in "ideological regulation, and it falls increasingly to them to repeatedly signify, and thereby naturalise, the social relations embedded in ideology" (Tomaselli, 1988: 17). The media has to play the role of unifying the "variety of ideological I's under the sign of an over-arching 'will' or identity" (Tomaselli, 1988: 19). A crucial concern with Althusser's contribution arises from his apparent intimation that persons are mere passive subjects in their social contexts raising the question of the extent to which individuals have agency to challenge their socialisation. It is around this aspect of his work

that culturalists take issue with Althusser. They argue that while there may exist a "dominant 'cultural logic'" in any given society, "any dominant form elicits alternative forms", that "[r]esistance is the principle of historical change" (Tomaselli, 1988: 20-21). Essentially, they are arguing for individual capacity and agency as a key impetus in mobilising historical change.

While Althusser's 'reproduction theory' has been extensively analysed, his comment on ISAs together with the culturalist critique, provides a basis on which to view other contributions regarding information-generating institutions and knowledge-power relationships. Therborn's reservations concerning Althusser's ISAs are worth noting, for they provide us with a deeper understanding of the ideological terrain. He argues that ideologies do not only exist in institutionalised apparatuses and contends that "the family", for instance, is not ordinarily a state apparatus. Furthermore, he argues that it "seems rather sterile and even actively confusing, from an analytical point of view, to extend the concept of the state to cover everything that serves the reproduction of a social order" (1980: 85). Ideological apparatuses should instead be viewed as "part of the organisation of power in society, and the social relations of power are condensed and crystalised within the state" (Therborn, 1980: 85). A significant concept which he introduces to explain the nuanced nature of ideological processes is identifying the role of "counter-apparatuses" such as mass organisations and alternative formations which influence the way people are made to see, interpret and shape their realities.

2.3.2 Dominant and counter ideologies

The discussion thus far raises the question of the relative power of dominant ideologies in relation to counter ideologies. Jansen argues that the "central feature of knowledge-power relationships in the world system is one of domination by the core over the periphery" (1991: 19). He goes on to argue that while the (apparent) "hegemony" of the Western world is challenged both within the core and vehemently resisted from within the periphery, he is emphatic that

> the notion of dependency still remains a powerful means of explaining the heavy, continued and uncritical reliance on theories and methods originating from the Western core. Third world intellectuals and their research endeavours are often heavily influenced and constrained by imported theoretical orientations which do not "fit" their local contexts or capture the cultural-specific nuances of situations in which they work (Jansen, 1991: 20).

This postulation has to be considered in relation to a number of factors:

the unique and sometimes prolific work which is fairly well established within the NGO sector which not only challenges 'dominant' ideology but assumes a semi-autonomous dynamic. Counter methods are not only significant in relation to mainstream thought, but are rooted in 'popular' experience and perpetuate 'alternative' thought in accordance with their own unfolding dynamic. Put simply, counter methodology is not only reactive by nature but develops a dynamic of its own.

the work performed by certain intellectuals - organic and otherwise - signify self-sustaining break-aways from traditional and dominant views.

the culturalists point out that ideology and cultural forms are in a constant state of "shifting impermanence" and argue that relations are not as black and white but more nuanced than the core-periphery model suggests (Tomaselli, 1988: 20).

Thus the notion that knowledge and ideology are constantly in flux, that there are ongoing battles which challenge dominant power relations means that counter apparatuses such as service organisations which constitute an extra-governmental political force contribute to shaping the ideological terrain. As Lee characterises them,

> NGOs are one element of civil society which , as a whole, is an autonomous entity outside of the family, that is accorded an important and constraining role with respect to the state and political power-holders. In other words, NGOs are one of the sets of organisations which limit the power of the state in relation to the lives of the citizens, and mediate between individuals and the state (1993: 35).

However this does not contradict the views expressed by Jansen and by Mattelart in the paragraph below, viz. that dominant groupings wield extraordinary power in presenting their 'systems' as 'correct'.

Mattelart (1980: 36-47), writing about the Chilean experience, argues within Althusser's structuralist framework that the mass media are ISAs which serve to reproduce particular social formations, that the press functions "in the interests of the owners of the means of production"; that taking over the organs of power to serve different interests calls for their fundamental transformation not a mere control of the apparatuses; and that the dominated (what he calls the 'left') "are victims of a congenital deformation, born as they were within a frame of reference structured by the bourgeois ideology of domination". His contention is that dominant classes entrench

power not only through the content of messages but the very organisation of the institutions which propagate their ideology and that their socialisation of 'subjects' is more deeply rooted than it appears. This argument ties up with Jansen's 'dependency theory' referred to above. In the South African experience it will be shown below how the apartheid state has used various apparatuses including the mass media, public libraries, and school text books to reproduce their hegemony.

The following section will discuss Gramsci's contribution to the debate about social transformation which focuses on the concept of hegemony.

2.3.3 Gramsci's contribution

Gramsci developed Lenin's concept of hegemony to explain that dominant classes maintain their positions of power by winning the consent of the masses. In discussing the concept of hegemony, Gramsci's comments on the intellectuals, ideology and the 'war of position', all of which have bearing on the sociology of information, will be considered. Gramsci wrote in the 1930s and his work reflects the revolutionary dialect of the time. His conceptual framework of 'class struggle' has been retained, so as to contextualise and write more meaningfully about his theories.

A few notes on Gramsci's theory follow:

Any comment on hegemony necessarily entails, whether implicitly or explicitly, a comment on a fundamental class (such as a capitalist or working class) since it is these groupings which attempt to achieve hegemony.

Hegemony would refer to the 'control' or leadership which a class is

able to exercise over other classes and/or social groups in an alliance with them through the development of a historic bloc.

A historic bloc refers to the entire array of institutions - the sense-giving institutions such as religious, artistic and legal ones - which give people consciousness (Tomaselli, 1988: 24). Within a historic bloc, Gramsci writes, "material forms are the content and ideologies are the form" though "the material forces would be inconceivable historically without form and ideologies would be individual fancies without the material forces" (1977: 377).

Gramsci sees change as a continuous process, not simply as an eradication of the 'old order' but as a continuous development and building of the 'new order' which involves winning the consent of the masses.

In order to achieve hegemony initially, the working class has to win the active consent of other classes and has to appear capable of leading in place of the dominant or ruling class.

As Gramsci writes in the Prison Notebooks,

> [t]he normal exercise of hegemony on the now classical terrain of the parliamentary regime is characterised by the combination of force and consent. Indeed, the attempt is always made to ensure that force will appear to be based on the consent of the majority, expressed by the so-called organs of public opinion - newspaper and associations - which, therefore, in certain situations, are artificially multiplied (1977: 80).

The role of these apparatuses in building and maintaining hegemony will be returned to later in this chapter when the South African setting is considered in greater detail. The role of intellectuals in building hegemony and the nature of the 'war of position' in effecting change is considered next.

Gramsci differentiates between traditional and organic intellectuals. Organic intellectuals of the proletariat do not have to be of working class origin, but they are those agents who represent the interests of this class. Traditional intellectuals are 'free-floating' intellectuals who assume ostensibly an independence from class association although in practice, Gramsci argues, they serve the interests of the dominant class. Since it is the role of the organic intellectuals and more correctly of the revolutionary party - the collective intellectual - to build its class's hegemony, it is their duty to undermine the traditional intellectuals. As Simon argues, "one of the most important characteristics of any rising class is its struggle to assimilate and conquer 'ideologically' the traditional intellectuals" (1982: 95). It follows then that the working class has to develop a stratum of organic intellectuals to bring about hegemonic change. In the following chapter, the contributions made by 'activists' from within service organisations can partly be understood in this light.

For Gramsci, as for Althusser, ideologies are materially based but also exist in ideas (Hall, 1977: 45). Gramsci draws a distinction between historically organic, necessary ideologies and arbitrary nationalistic ones. The former "organise human masses and create the terrain on which men [sic] move, acquire consciousness of their position, struggle etc." The latter "only create individual movements, polemics and so on" (Gramsci, 1971: 377).

These definitions and distinctions are important since they move beyond the narrow notion of 'false consciousness' to show that working class hegemony must be developed prior to the seizure of state power. Ideology is propagated through the institutions and organisations of civil society or private society - the sphere of the integral state which Gramsci contrasts with the repressive/coercive state which exerts direct domination and in which popular democratic struggles occur. Gramsci often refers to the integral state which includes both civil society and the state as "hegemony protected by the armour of coercion" (1971: 263) and points out that civil society has a definite political character in that it is here that the struggle for hegemony is waged.

Gramsci argues that there is often a contradiction between one's socialised beliefs and one's actions, implying that the roots of revolutionary ideology are repressed by the dominant ideology until the latter is transformed by the former. A hegemonic class in ideological struggle never completely demolishes the existing ideology/collective will. Instead, the process is dialectical whereby the positive features, usually subordinate in the existing ideological formation, are transformed and articulate with developing ideologies in becoming incorporated into the new collective will. The "struggle for hegemony consists of this process of disarticulation-rearticulation" (Mouffe, 1981: 175). Furthermore in order to achieve a new collective will, groups have to undergo moral and intellectual transformation. This is the process of ideological struggle in which the working class, by transcending its 'corporate' consciousness is able to combine the interests of other classes and social groups with its own and act as the leadership of this social bloc, i.e. it develops a political consciousness and becomes

hegemonic. This process of ideological struggle is one in which the working class challenges ruling class/bourgeois hegemony which gives rise to a crisis for ruling class leadership in which case the latter resorts to a "passive revolution" in an attempt to reorganise and re-establish its hegemony (Buci-Glucksmann, 1980: 54-6).

During the process of moral and intellectual reform - by which a common conception of the world will be created - or the development of a new historic bloc, ideology acts as 'cement' in the cohesion of diverse classes and social groups who share a common aim. On a practical level this would require the assimilation of popular democratic struggles - which do not necessarily have a class character/base - with those of the working class. As has been previously mentioned, a class becomes hegemonic not through imposing its interests on other classes and social groups but through combining the interests of other social groups with its own so that a new ideological formation develops. Fundamental to this process is the articulation between the old ideological formation and the arising one so that a new ideological formation encompassing certain 'popular' elements of the old bourgeois formation is developed.

Ideological struggle occurs within the development of a war of position in which the working class continually challenges bourgeois hegemony and fights not only to achieve hegemony but also to maintain it. The working class within its broad democratic alliance, constantly tries to undermine the legitimacy of the bourgeoisie throughout civil society. So as to break bourgeois rule, the working class has to try to sever the relations of consent fundamental to bourgeois rule. This is a dialectical process involving resistance, repression and counter-resistance in a constant attempt to

isolate the bourgeois minority from the rest of society, viz. the masses under working class leadership.

Although Gramsci's contribution is couched in the rhetoric of class analysis and struggle, it provides insight into how processes of fundamental transformation occurs through struggles occurring at the levels of the sense-giving institutions (religious, cultural, legal etc) (Tomaselli, 1988: 24). Gramsci's writing allows for an understanding of how institutions such as library and information services constitute part of the terrain in which dominant groupings propagate their ideology while resistant or revolutionary groupings challenge, assert and disseminate alternative views and symbols.

The contributions of these various authors, writing at a time of social change, highlight the importance of information - transmitted through material forms such as the mass media, public institutions and language - in reproducing and/or transforming the status quo. A theme which comes through is that ideologies are constantly in flux, they never remain static but are always in motion, indicating the nuanced and consistent nature of social change. Contributions to change have to be understood in this way: a possible analogy is the relationship between battles and wars - in the absence of a war, there are usually ongoing battles. Thus, as has been noted earlier, alongside practices of perpetuating the status quo on the part of the groups in power, struggle is constant and there are ongoing 'battles' to undermine and challenge the 'reality' portrayed by dominant groups.

2.4 Information control in apartheid South Africa

The following section draws on the above contributions in an attempt to sketch how information control was used by apartheid South Africa to

reproduce a system of discrimination. In order to speak in greater depth about the forms of information control exerted by the apartheid regime, a more detailed discussion of the relationship between information and ideology is entered into. In this regard the nature of reality or of how people understand and interpret their realities is discussed. This allows for the previous section on ideology to be linked to the earlier section on the situationality of information.

Within the above framework, it is evident that ruling groups which have achieved hegemony dominate the ideological terrain to create the impression that the status quo is a natural and acceptable way of life. As Wyley writes:

> Ideological regulation operating in the interests of a hegemonic alliance relies on control of the ways in which meaning is produced in society, and the constant repetition and reinforcement of such controlled meaning, with the eventual result that the dominance of ruling groups, or the status quo, is presented as natural (1990: 7).

In this way subjects are socialised to perceive of and accept a dominant portrayal of reality as fashioned by ruling groups. But this argument easily results in what could be a simplistic notion of 'false consciousness', implying that this is the only reality subjects perceive. As with knowledge, reality is not static but is in constant formation just as knowledge is in constant flux. It is fluid and constructed by individuals in accordance with the articulation between their 'internal' and 'external' worlds. This ties up both with Dervin's information 1 & 2 model, as well as with the constructivist view of knowledge discussed in chapter four.

The concept of 'multiple realities' which is premised on the belief that there is not an absolute, objective reality, is further complicated by the fact that we use language and symbols which have their own constraints, to

communicate our meanings. We are thus often unable to articulate our experience of reality in exact terms, and communicate instead a representation of that reality.

> The contradiction so puzzling to the ordinary way of thinking comes from the fact that we have to use language to communicate our inner experience which in its very nature transcends linguistics (Suzuki quoted in Capra, 1975: 45).

Notwithstanding this problem of communicating experiences and different realities, it can generally be argued that one of the ways in which the dominant groups assert their power is through employing the notions of 'objectivity' and 'neutrality'. These notions are particularly immanent in the field of journalism with some journalists claiming to be objective or neutral in their accounts of news. As will be discussed below, these claims are undermined by the fact that "... we are all bound by our cultural base, our class positions and our political bias" (CCSU, 1985: 15).

As noted above, the mass media is one of the major apparatuses or institutions used to reproduce social systems. As the CCSU state: "We can see that the media serve as a strategic weapon in the battle to win our hearts and minds to the cause of business, industry and capitalist society ... The media serve to reinforce the world view on which the dominant cultures are based" (1985: 27). It is important to note precisely this 'reinforcing' role. As Morris argues: "the mass media's effectiveness lies in their ability to reinforce existing attitudes and it is far more difficult for the mass media to change existing opinions and ideologies" (1978: 163).

Harris argues that it is not only the mass media which performs a reinforcing role in society vis-a-vis the reproduction of dominant socio-political, economic and cultural relations. He states that "libraries like the media were

seen to be largely reflective or expressive of the achieved consensus" and he draws on Stuart Hall to note that "since the consensus was a 'good thing', those reinforcing efforts ... were given a benign and positive reading" (1986: 215). He further writes that:

> Librarians were seen as apolitical servants of the 'people' and were expected to be completely neutral on social, economic and political questions - a passive 'mirror' of societal interests and values. Libraries came to be seen as simple mirrors, neutral reflections of society's 'racial memory' (Hall, 1986: 215).

Similarly to the mass media, the public library system of apartheid South Africa was also used to entrench dominant ideology by virtue of the collections they held, their geographical concentration in predominantly 'white', urban areas and their concomitant inaccessibility to the vast majority of the citizenry. Where located in historically black areas, they generally failed to provide an appropriate educational or developmental role. As a recent report notes:

> There has been, and still is, inequitable distribution of facilities. It is clear that the deracialisation of libraries (for example the scrapping of the Separate Amenities Act) has not in itself brought about a more equitable system, particularly if one looks at the physical location of school and public libraries (Library & Information Services: Report of the NEPI Library and Information Services Research Group, 1992: 43).

With regard to the role of librarian, as Wyley notes in writing about apartheid South Africa,

> Librarians in South Africa ... are faced with involvement in the implementation of restrictions on academic and intellectual freedom ... in practice librarians are forced to act as agents of those seeking ideological regulation of South African society ... compelled by law to act as agents of the state, or collaborators of the system ... librarians accept and facilitate censorship (1990: 10).

This clearly is a generalisation to which there were exceptions. However,

the point being asserted is that, in accordance with Harris's earlier claims, the work of librarians served to reproduce rather than challenge the status quo.

It is plain to see then that embedded in the role which the media and other information institutions such as libraries play in the production of meaning and the reproduction of systems, are the issues of objectivity and censorship. The following discussions contribute to an understanding of information control as a means of perpetuating certain power relations.

The notion of objectivity is linked to the positivist concept of neutrality and is often promoted by ruling groups controlling the media to create the impression that reports depict reality as the 'only' or 'absolute' way in which it exists. Questions of partiality or subjectivity on the part of journalists are dismissed as unprofessional and an objectivist framework is projected as a canon of the media. This view has been challenged by numerous authorities such as the CCSU who reject the idea that the news simply consists of facts and argue that within journalism there "is a complex process of selection and interpretation that ultimately produces 'the news'. The selection process is also affected by a range of factors, beginning with the straightforward limitations of time, resources and accessibility" (1985: 15).

Mattelart argues that journalists, as with all individuals, operate within the frame and terms of reference of their social group. Their selection criteria are determined by their allegiances and values. He says: "objectivity is the consecration of an ideology and class interest as a universal value" (1980: 38). Objectivism also holds that external reality is "factual" and that

journalism merely describes or presents these facts. However, "any description of reality 'as it is' is in fact imbued with ideological meaning ... interpretation is ... implicit in the very selection itself ... the interpretative grid encodes the transmitted events in terms of the dominant system of values" (Mattelart, 1980: 38).

Capra's work provides a parallel in the natural sciences which is useful for this study in its comment on meaning construction, the portrayal of reality and the research process. He writes that the

> patterns scientists observe in nature are intimately connected with the patterns of their minds - with their concepts, thoughts and values ... Although much of their detailed research will not depend explicitly on their value system, the larger framework within which this research is pursued will never be value-free. Scientists, therefore, are responsible for their research not only intellectually but also morally (Capra, 1975: 9).

This relates to Dervin's information1,2 & 3 model in which she proposes that external reality could be regarded as "objective" or out there. Reality only enters our consciousness through interpretation or assimilation. This reading of Dervin, to a significant extent answers the afore-mentioned difficulty with the concept of 'objective information', in that the latter is understood as existing outside of an individual's consciousness until such time as it articulates with and is absorbed into their internal reality. In other words, as soon as an individual connects with and interprets information1, it ceases to be external or to remain 'objective', and becomes instead, subjective information.

Central to the practice of information control is that of censorship through which certain ideas and information items are suppressed and withheld from the public domain. This has occurred through institutions such as library and

information services and the mass media. An interesting observation regarding information control is that inasmuch as no society lacks it, so too can no ruling group successfully control information. In the words of Tertius Myburgh: "... information no matter how much a government strives to conceal facts by law or otherwise, will always get out: distorted, perhaps, even through rumour or gossip, perhaps ... When information is suppressed, it goes underground" (1986: 63). And as Merrett notes, ultimately no state can control either 'thought or writing' absolutely. Despite concerted efforts at repression or co-option, resistance or expression cannot be quelled. An interesting consequence of information control is the ever-increasing creativity of left-wing, progressive writers (1982: 3).

One of the aims of censorship is to deny people access to information which is not in keeping with or which opposes and undermines the values and interests of the dominant political grouping. Without such information, the assumption is that disadvantaged groups will remain relatively uninformed. A further aim is to control and restrict the expression of grievances in the hope that suppression of these will impose an atmosphere of normality and neutralise resistance.

The control of information and communication flow is an historical feature of South African society. As Merrett explains, censorship became "an integral part of South African society ... Apartheid is based on repression and censorship is a vital cog in that system, using information and thought control to stifle healthy doubt, questioning and cynicism" (1982: 4). The historical Publications and Internal Security Acts (now repealed) were but two measures used to control information flow in our society. However censorship must be viewed not only in relation to the banning of

information, organisations and persons, it must be understood in the South African context in its entirety. As Merrett points out apartheid itself is a form of censorship which is mirrored at various levels throughout the society - its education system, security legislation, state secrecy, etc. (1990).

Naidoo alerts us to the fact that censorship is associated with a system of misinformation and disinformation (1985). We are made to see the world through the eyes of dominant groupings and to assume these views as normal. Clearly Gramsci's argument that we do not only possess a false consciousness, that as individuals we articulate with realities in ways which give rise to particular interpretations of those realities is valid. However, he also makes the argument that those in control of the means of communication are in positions of power in being able to assert particular views as dominant and more appealing than others (Buci-Glucksman, 1980: 255; Gramsci, 1985: 387). Tomaselli, elaborating Naidoo's point thus speaks not only of media repression, but also of "media management". She exemplifies this through tracing the apartheid government's establishment of a 'Forum' in 1984 to "coordinate the activities of the state's numerous public relations and press liaison officials and the press" (1987: 19). This Forum made no contribution to resolving the communication crisis as was intended and did little towards improving information flow. The Bureau for Information - the next step in responding to this crisis - was established in September 1985. The Bureau also emerged in a climate fraught with media repression. As Pakendorf says: "the government has a long history of very public and very vociferous attacks on the media - other than the state-run SABC - and there have been many attempts over the years to diminish both

the freedom with which information may be gathered and the freedom of opinion newspapers have" (1987: 23).

It is clear from the above that there have been extensive attempts to control the flow of information in the South African context not least due to the power of information in impacting upon people's consciousness.

2.5 Information, education and development: the links

Based on an understanding of the socio-political nature of information, the following section attempts to draw the links between information, education and development. Whereas the previous argument sketched the way in which information can be used to reinforce dominant power relations, the following discussion explores the role which information and the information sector play or can play in a context of development in transforming power relations.

The Translis Coalition (in a second draft of their National Library and Information Services Policy document) argues that "[i]nformation is a valuable, strategic resource" and that "[i]ts availability enables citizens to participate in decision-making processes" thus allowing them to shape their environments. They further argue that there is a direct relationship between information and power and that within this context of power struggles, information is a "commodity which carries ideas and is used to promote and advance ideologies". This view, they say, marks a break from the "traditional view of the neutrality of information and the various channels through which it is transmitted" (1994: 2).

The views expressed by the Translis Coalition denote a conceptual shift in

understandings of information including its centrality to and pivotal role in developmental contexts. In keeping with this role, the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) calls for a "democratic information programme" which can facilitate the free flow of information so that people and government are equipped to take informed decisions (1994: 133). The RDP's commitment to "[o]pen debate and transparency in government and society ... [as] ... crucial elements of reconstruction and development" as well as broadening of the Freedom of Information Act, is still to be tested in the process of transformation. However, it signals a significant break from the Apartheid regime's practices of controlling information flow for the purposes of entrenching its undemocratic status quo.

The notion of the integral relation between information and development is implicit in the paradigm shift within the information science field. The knowledge-power and information-development concepts are premised on the notion of the situationality of information and recognise the value of appropriate information in a system. The RDP's notion of an "informed citizenry" which proposes that people have to be informed in order to participate in decision-making processes, is linked to that of empowerment or the need to empower people through their access to appropriate information. As the Programme states, "[d]evelopment is not about the delivery of goods to a passive citizenry. It is about active involvement and growing empowerment" (1994: 5). Mchombu writes that:

information work in developing countries differs markedly from that in developed countries; and

information workers must play an active role in the process of socio-economic development (1982: 241).

These positions are not only pertinent to the developing world. Kempson, in

a British context, similarly argues the need for information agencies which will meet the needs of its citizenry (1986). She argues that information services should be provided to "help people both to participate in the running of society and to take a more equal share of the benefits of the development of society" and contends that the Anglo-American model of library and information services is not necessarily equipped to meet this essential requirement (1986: 186).

In Britain and the United States, community information services have been set up to assist people with daily problem solving and participating in the development of their societies (Bunch, 1982; Kempson, 1990; Kinnell, 1992). These community information services which grew out of a desire to assist minorities, marginalised groupings and the information poor, mark an attempt to provide appropriate information to communities. They are aimed particularly at "those who are disadvantaged as a result of their social and economic position, their race, health, physical disabilities, or age" (Madden, 1983: 155), and their intention, as Martin notes, is to provide "the kind of information necessary for participation as a full and equal member of society" (1984: 385). However, Kinnell notes that there is a divide between the theoretical underpinnings and intentions of the British and American community information services and their practice. For example, although literature on community information work promotes the notion of proactivity suggesting that information has to be linked to action, "librarians were still reluctant to give advice in practice" rejecting a role of advocacy (1992: 30). Bunch adds that in terms of the "information-advice-advocacy continuum ... many librarians regard advice giving as not part of their function, on the grounds that they do not have the time, the training or the protection" to do

so (1982: 16).

In the South African setting, Barnard writes that the country "has a long history of building and creating internal and external linkages and obstacles preventing a free flow of information". He argues that "development depends on information" and that if "the people of Southern Africa are to play a constructive role in accelerating and sustaining development, they need development information in a language they can understand and in a form which they can relate to their own situation" (1994: 1). Important issues of appropriateness of information, accessibility of form and methodology of delivery to ensure utilisation of the information are raised here and will be re-visited in chapter five.

To understand how information can support and enhance development, the nature of development underway in South Africa will be briefly considered. The RDP framework proposes that development ought to be an integrated process (1994: 6). In its consideration of a wide-range of developmental initiatives underway at any given point, it adopts a holistic approach suggesting that communities must be developed on all levels and not only in certain areas at the expense of others. For example, nutrition, electrification and housing projects are regarded as directly related to improved schooling through nurturing the student for the educational environment and providing the conditions for a culture of learning which extends beyond the classroom. In this way too, the integration of education and training are proposed within the framework of life-long learning. Essentially, the RDP is concerned with the infrastructural development of South Africa as a country, but this is premised on a commitment to improving the quality of life of its citizenry and their human development.

This systemic, holistic approach to development bears on the argument in two direct ways. Firstly, it emphasises in the South African context the need for appropriate information which will feed a wide-range of development projects and the need to coordinate the provision of information in ways which will achieve maximum efficiency. Secondly, it signals the need to empower communities or groups through the mediation of information in ways which will ensure its contribution to development. These issues are dealt with in greater depth in considering the nature of information work in the following chapter, and the integral relation between information and education below.

The RDP and ANC Education Policy Framework Document argue for the integration of education and training on the basis that effective human resource development has to engender a culture of and opportunity for life-long learning (ANC, 1994a; ANC, 1994b). This basic framework breaks with the traditional view of education being acquired only in formal institutions and seeks to accredit learning and skills "which people have acquired through experience and informal training" (ANC, 1994b: 10). In terms of developing a national learning system, the document states that: "[e]ducation and training have a crucial role to play in contributing to social and economic development through empowering individuals to actively participate in all aspects of society, as citizens in the democratic process, and in the economy" (ANC, 1994b: 15).

The vision of providing quality life-long learning to all South African citizens which will be learner-centred is premised on resource-based and interactive learning approaches and marks a shift from the traditional methodology of rote-learning. This approach echoes the learner-centred approach adopted

by many education-based NGOs as will be seen in the following chapter. It is also in keeping with the "situational" view of information and its relation to knowledge as outlined above which essentially argues for the utilisation of appropriate information to aid education and development.

An educational approach which encourages critical thinking and which draws on the skills and experiences of learners, necessarily takes cognisance of their knowledge-bases. Given the information-knowledge framework, it can be argued that information and information skills are critically important to a learner-centred pedagogy. The National Education Policy Investigation Library and Information Services (NEPI LIS) Report argues for an integration of information servicing with education drawing on the example of Sweden which has high achievement levels to show that independent learning requires a wide-ranging base of learning resources (1992: 60). The report also suggests the introduction of an information skills course in the school curriculum as is practised in Namibia. It cites the Namibian argument for the introduction of this curriculum as resting on the "acknowledgement that education and development depend on information and the capacity of the individual to locate and use it". The curriculum includes a focus on "skills to equip students to recognise and retrieve information from their human and environmental sources" (Library & Information Services: Report of the NEPI Library and Information Services Research Group, 1992: 60).

The argument for the integration of the education and information spheres is thus premised on the belief that information is a key component in the learning process and that it is packaged not only in hard copy resources but is embedded in the very context in which people learn. As has been

discussed earlier, information is part of our internal and external realities. It is mediated in a number of ways and by a number of agents. We are both subjects in our realities and agents involved in the process of interpreting our realities and producing meaning from our particular contexts. Within this framework, the role of facilitator or educator assumes major significance in mediating information in ways that allow learners the space to learn and to produce meaning. While this discussion has not focused on the in-depth research which has been done into cognitive developmental patterns and meaning production, it has created some basis for the discussion on the role of educators and facilitators which is undertaken in the following chapter.

2.6 Conclusion

In addressing the need for a conceptual understanding of information, this chapter has noted the situationality of information and argued that information assumes value in relation to a need. By drawing on the works of Althusser and Gramsci, the relationship between information and ideology has been asserted. In accordance with this view, the role assumed by information institutions, including libraries, in reproducing dominant relations of power in a society has been discussed. The role played by individuals within this institutional context has also been noted with an argument made for the co-existence of multiple realities and the role individuals can play in transforming their realities. Thus people who operate within institutions and organisations are seen as key agents of change.

This chapter has also provided, by way of historical reflection on South African society, an argument in support of the integration of information, education and developmental work. It has been proposed that such

integration is imperative to the realisation of life-long and resource-based learning. As will be shown in the following chapter, this approach to information, education and development underpins the work of service organisations.

Chapter Three

Information services and an approach to interactive learning

3.1 Introduction

Information services which could be regarded as apparatuses aiming to counter apartheid ideology, proliferated in the early 1980s. This chapter maps the rise of some of these counter apparatuses, paying particular attention to the emergence of resource centres which typify such information services. As noted in the introductory chapter, this thesis concerns itself with those service organisations which have an explicit political agenda to strengthen the democratic movement. On this basis, the purpose of this chapter is to attempt an understanding of the nature of these organisations and some of the problems they encounter as structures in themselves, as well as in relation to their constituencies. In this regard issues such as democracy and accountability which are central to the way in which these organisations intervene in and impact upon situations, is discussed. The educational philosophy behind service organisation practice as well as a critical discussion of interactive learning and the empowerment process are also discussed to provide a fuller context in which to view the contribution of these formations to enabling their constituencies to effect change.

3.2 The emergence of NGOs and information services

3.2.1 Terminology and the nature of 'voluntary associations'

The terms 'service organisation' or 'NGO' are current in South African debate and are synonymous with others such as 'voluntary associations' as used by Matiwana et al in their study of community organisations in Greater Cape Town (1989: 9). The service organisations considered here are those which are closely aligned with and which supported the democratic movement in their counter-hegemonic struggle waged against the apartheid state. Walters notes that such organisations mushroom at a time of social crisis. She draws on Johnson to identify the following four factors which distinguish voluntary associations:

1. Method of formation: the organisation does not owe its existence to statutory authority but consists of a group of people who have come together voluntarily.

2. Method of governance: the organisation is self-governing and decides on its own constitution and its own policy. The members determine the activities, the services to be provided and the methods to be adopted. They are under no legal obligation to provide a service, and they can select their own clients.

3. Methods of finance: at least some of the organisation's money should come from voluntary sources.

4. Motive: the organisation should be non-profit-making (1986: 29-30).

It should be noted that voluntary organisations would include mass-based, grassroots organisations. The latter unite groups of people such as women, students, workers, civic dwellers and youth who share common goals and interests such as the improvement of their living and/or working conditions. In view of this it can be suggested that the term 'voluntary associations' constitutes a rubric or umbrella term for service organisations.

3.2.2 The historical emergence of organisations

Throughout the 1970's, mass organisations which had been severely repressed in the early 1960's, re-emerged in communities, among students, workers, women and youth. These organisations formed part of a more clearly distinguishable 'national democratic movement' by 1980 which supported a 'non-racial, national and democratic struggle' (Matiwana et al, 1989: 26). Throughout the 1980s, the crisis in the country intensified on all levels with increasing state repression on the one hand, and increasing extra-parliamentary opposition on the other. Severe restrictions were placed on organisations, persons and the media which included bannings, states of emergency, restrictions, censorship etc. This was coupled by strategies of cooption such as the 'winning the hearts and minds' campaigns referred to in the previous chapter. An example of such action is the 1986 Atlantis experience in which the Joint Management Committee handed out food parcels and organised soccer tours for children (Matiwana et al, 1989: 55). Alongside these developments, resistance activities intensified although mass organisations operated under conditions of severe restraint which curtailed their strategies and forced them to adopt 'survival' tactics.

3.2.3 The rise and nature of resource centres-cum-information services

A clearer distinction can be drawn between the emergence of service organisations and that of community-based organisations (CBOs) vis-a-vis their nature and role. The following discussion will focus on the mushrooming of resource centres (which fall within the service organisation sector) in the 1980s. The reason for choosing to focus on resource centres is two-fold: (1)their primary concern with education and information support

to mass organisations is germane to this study; and (2)they are a discrete sector which falls within the realm of service organisations and consideration of their methods of operating will allow for a discussion of principles of democracy, accountability and educational practices which are at the heart of these organisations.

Nassimbeni outlines the emergence of resource centres against the backdrop of political, social and ideological developments, arguing that their rise has to be contextualised in this way. She writes that "[t]heir origins have roots in the broader political and educational crises which have engulfed the country and their appearance coincided with the establishment or strengthening of popular oppositional organisations that sprang up in response to a series of political crises" (1992: 8). With regard to their purpose, Stilwell says that their "predominant task has been to strengthen the mass-based organisations and consequently to serve the mass democratic movement. Their orientation derives from a situation of mass oppression, including inadequate and biased library and information services, severe state censorship and an unequal education system" (1992: 213).

Karlsson proposes a definition of resource centres which is based on the expression of practitioners in the field:

> a space or building in which human and other resources in a variety of media (e.g. books, journals, newspapers, film, slides, video and audio cassettes, three-dimensional objects, etc.) and equipment (e.g. recorders, cameras, computers, photocopiers, printers, fax machines etc.) are arranged or made accessible in an appropriate manner for the purpose of empowering people through information dissemination, production, skills and resource sharing. A resource centre incorporates community involvement and participation at all levels. Learning and interaction occurs directly with the resources (1992: 2).

The notions of appropriate resources embodying value and of interactive

learning are clearly encompassed in this definition. The 'alternative' nature of resource centres and the challenge they posed to state or establishment structures is perhaps less apparent and more implicit in the statement.

There is general agreement among the afore-mentioned authors (Karlsson, Nassimbeni, Stilwell) as to the aims of resource centres. They are understood to revolve around the empowerment of their user communities so as to effect socio-political and economic transformation. Resource centre services are devoted to the mediation of information, education and resources in ways which will ensure their effective utilisation as well as the empowerment of users. The operations of these projects are thus closely tied to the struggle for hegemony referred to in chapter two in that information services aim to empower communities and mass organisations through the mediation of skills and knowledge which can be used to transform oppressive social and economic conditions. In this way resource centres function as catalysts or facilitators in a process of change. It is evident then that the very nature of the work of these organisations - and the generalisation holds for most if not all service organisations - is political since their goals are about empowering users to transform their conditions. Lund and van Harte's comment on community work which pertains, shows that the nature of the work of the organisations is also political in another respect. They argue that in the past, community workers could innocently commit political offences by transgressing laws which were poorly worded:

> certain Acts which have relevance to people working for social change have key definitions which are not clearly defined or are defined so broadly that they are open to almost any interpretation. Community workers, and many others working for peaceful change, can transgress these laws without being aware of it (1980: 87).

Also of significance is that work practice, both in terms of internal organisational practice, and relations with users has emphasised democracy and accountability. Service organisations aspire to principles of democracy and accountability in the belief that their practices should reflect the goals they are trying to achieve in society at large. Parallels between their internal organisational practices and their approaches to engaging their constituencies are usually evident. For example, resource centres attempt to function along democratic lines, involving team approaches to decision-making and the allocation of tasks. Workers - including people with different training and experience - usually share ideas, experiences and skills in order to direct the course of their work creatively and collectively. Responsibility for routine and the more mundane tasks is also often shared by all staff so that unskilled workers do not become marginalised by being overloaded with this sort of work. The active involvement of the entire team in planning a centre's programme is facilitated through regular meetings and evaluation sessions.

The notion of democracy extends to the way in which resource centres engage their users who are recognised as an active audience able to contribute to the mission of the centre. Information work encourages interaction and active participation of users seeking to ensure that they are able to make effective use of the information provided. This generates a two-way process of interchange whereby users feed back into the centre, informing its practices and programmes. Through interactive information work, a Socratic approach to addressing information needs is encouraged: the exchange of ideas between 'provider' and 'recipient' is dialectical resulting in joint identification of ways of addressing the information query.

In summary, information work involves:

providing appropriate information in appropriate forms;

mediating information to users to ensure that they can use the information delivered;

helping users design strategies to ensure that they are in fact addressing their needs through their ability to act on the information. Where information workers do not provide this support function themselves, they direct users to suitably equipped people or agencies who do (Karelse, 1991).

The following sub-section (cf 3.3) will illustrate the commonalities between interactive information work and interactive learning. It could be argued that the notion of interaction which is core to both processes, reinforces the inter-relatedness of information and education work as discussed in chapter two. Thus implicit in NGO approaches to education as discussed below, are their approaches to the mediation of information. Interactive learning is necessarily concerned with the 'effective' mediation and assimilation and possibly the generation of information and knowledge.

Matiwana et al argue that the emphasis on democracy prominent within service organisations is directly related to philosophies of collective will, participation and community which were concepts pivotal to thinking in mass organisations (1989: 13 - 45). They draw on the work of Perlman (1976; 1980), IMTEC (1983) and Kindervatter (1979) to discuss these issues as well as educational philosophies which underpin these beliefs. These contributions will be discussed in some detail below to enrich the understanding of how service organisations approach their work. An investigation of cases documented in chapter five will also illustrate the organisational importance of collective leadership and participatory democracy to NGOs.

3.2.4 Issues of participation and empowerment

Matiwana et al draw on Rothschild-Whitt to argue that people can develop participatory styles through practice and exposure to opportunity to partake in important decision-making (1989: 18). In other words, democratic practice inculcates and engenders democratic behaviour. However, experience shows that problems of opportunism and personal ambition do not disappear in a democratic organisational environment and have to be dealt with honestly and openly. Perlman argues that while participation may not necessarily produce 'complete democrats', it yields beneficial results:

> Dignity is gained, or regained, through many aspects of the citizen action process, but particularly through 1)actions which demystify the authorities, and provide the sweet taste of power, and 2)internal participatory democracy which gives every member a chance to be heard, a chance to make mistakes (and to learn from these without humiliation) and to disagree with others (and to resolve these differences without rancour) (1980: 15).

Both she and Kindervatter argue - similarly to Freire - that action and critical reflection "which will include an analysis and interpretation of the action" are imperative to the organisational educational process (Matiwana et al, 1989: 20). As Perlman writes: "people do, in fact, learn and re-interpret the world around them all the time as long as they are alive ... this happens to a greater or lesser degree depending on three factors: action, interpretation and internalisation" (1980: 23). And of the latter stage she says: "Campaigns may fail and organisations may die, but the learning that people have internalised is for life" (Perlman, 1980: 18). These postulations serve as a reminder that even though action may not be as apparent as the formulation of a strategy plan, if information impacts on recipients, it necessarily changes their knowledge bases and in this way alters their

perceptions which will at some stage lead to action (cf chapter two). Therefore it can be argued that the learning which participants acquire through their engagement with service organisations is cumulative, impacts on consciousness and invariably leads to action of some form or another. Thus Perlman's three factors of action, interpretation and internalisation should not be understood only in a linear or looping way. Learning occurs laterally and a group might well choose to act before and/or after they have interpreted and internalised experiences. The point being made is that the process of empowerment is neither neatly defined nor clear-cut and does not occur in a stagist manner.

The goal of empowering constituencies is clearly central to the work of service organisations. Kindervatter defines empowerment as: "people gaining an understanding of and control over social, economic and/or political forces in order to improve their standing in society". She presents eight characteristics as guidelines for a non-formal educational approach to empowerment, viz:

1. Small group structure (emphasis on small group activity and autonomy).
2. Transfer of responsibility to participants from the facilitator.
3. Participant leadership in decision-making over all aspects of the organisation.
4. Outside agent as facilitator who supports the people in doing things themselves.
5. Democratic and non-hierarchical relationships and processes. Roles and responsibilities are shared.
6. Integration of reflection and action. Analysis moves to collaborative efforts to promote change e.g. problem-solving, planning, skills development, and confrontation skills.
7. Methods that encourage self-reliance e.g. peer learning, support networks.

8. Improvement of social, economic, and/or political standing results from the process (1979: 150-4).

These guidelines are at the heart of operations in many service organisations and certainly pivotal to the practices of ILRIG - one of the cases discussed in chapter five. However, as will be seen in that case, while the guidelines provide a functional framework within which to operate, they do not provide sufficient basis on which to communicate with users. Other issues often specific to the situation in which these organisations function such as that of arriving at a balance between accountability and proactivity in relation to interactions with users, require policy positions similar to those outlined above. The following sub-section (cf 3.3.2) also alerts to difficulties with the notion of empowerment and cautions that organisational commitment to the goal hardly guarantees its attainment for participants. As will be argued below, empowerment is not necessarily a 'gift' which can be handed to recipients in information or education interactions, but possibly a goal which people have to realise for themselves.

It is the primary goal of empowering their constituencies that makes the educational and information roles of service organisations so vital. The following sub-section addresses various issues regarding the educational role of these organisations. It should be noted as indicated earlier, that the inter-relation between education and information work as discussed in chapter two underpins the following discussion.

3.3 Approaches to education

Education and information-based service organisations aim to provide their services to particular constituencies to promote socio-political and economic transformation. NGOs perform this role on the understanding that education

is not neutral. Service organisations thus utilise educational spaces to promote political agendas. This role poses a difficulty relating to knowledge-power relations and the role of intellectuals as discussed in chapter two, and is partially addressed by organisations through efforts to improve user participation in the design, production, presentation and evaluation of educational programmes and contracts - as will be seen in chapter five. The tensions however, between political 'interventionism' and the provision of a service do not disappear and essentially manifest themselves according to ways in which an organisation carries out its work and engages its constituency. The particular knowledge-power relation which exists between teachers and learners is discussed below (cf 3.3.2).

This section considers some of the issues involved in the education environment. After discussing certain features of the learning process which reraises questions of what learners do with knowledge and information, some issues central to the education process such as the subjectivity of facilitators and the complexity of empowerment, are discussed. It is intended that the abstract consideration of these issues here will pave the way and provide a framework for addressing them more concretely in chapter five.

3.3.1 Information inputs in the learning process

Professor Carl Hayward, a visiting lecturer to the South African Association for the Learning Disabled, argues that education is about helping learners to think (1994). He draws on Piaget to explain that there are four stages of cognitive development: knowledge, understanding, operations and strategising. Through the latter stage, learners use information and

knowledge to plan and plot courses of action which may arise immediately upon acquisition of knowledge or after a long while. Knowledge is essentially acquired through experience: modelling, imitating, seeing, and listening as well as through mediation. Through mediation, learners develop thinking skills which lead to problem-solving. The process also involves confidence-building which reinforces the learners' capacity to think, learn and problem-solve. Thus it is clear that information and knowledge are central concepts in the learning process. It is around the area of mediation that NGOs attempt to reinforce learners' experiences as valid within the context of an imposed reality and way of seeing. They also aim to encourage a greater awareness of the "strategising" phase of learning so that learners use their knowledge more consciously. The general idea within NGOs is that they too are learners in the educational sphere and that these interactions with audiences, together with evaluations, will lead to improvement of their skills in helping learners to think. This view of facilitation is discussed in section 3.3.2 on Freire's methodology.

The process of mediation in the learning environment, is laden with issues of power, of who 'controls' the process, of content, format and ownership. In an attempt to shed light on some of these issues, the work of Paulo Freire which constitutes a primary contribution to 'alternative' approaches to education for transformation (and which provides a seemingly latent or underlying framework for many educational NGOs) is considered below.

3.3.2 Freire's contribution to understanding the education process

Paulo Freire's work which marks a substantial contribution to 'alternative' educational pedagogy has been critically discussed by Versfeld (1990). She

appraises it in accordance with its relevance to the educational practices of a particular NGO and in this way considers the value of the approach in relation to service organisational practice. The following sub-section considers the political nature of education, the teacher/learner relationship and the issues of empowerment and conscientisation.

3.3.2.1 The political nature of the education process

One of Freire's primary arguments is that no education is ever neutral. His position on the domestication of subjects through state-run educational programmes is similar to that taken up in the previous chapter regarding the neutrality and objectivity of the media. Versfeld argues that "education seeking domestication ... reproduces and perpetuates dominant social norms and economic patterns and so cannot be neutral" (1990: 17). It can be further proposed that alternative education where the objective is not domestication but liberation, much like 'mainstream' education - to use the latter as an oppositional framework - also can never be neutral.

Given the politicised nature of education, the problems arise, not of depoliticising education, but rather of working within the framework of the knowledge-power relation to bring about the empowerment of individuals so that they are enabled to transform their environments. Freire's writing supports the position argued in chapter two, viz. that knowledge is not an independent entity but in a constant process of transition which accords with individuals' constantly changing realities. Thus the issue is not only a matter of what information is imparted but "how control is exercised and how knowledge is developed within individuals and groups" (Versfeld, 1990: 19). The problems of context and power relations are also

information concerns expressed in the questions: whose knowledge and whose reality is mediated to individuals and collectives, and in what ways?

One of Freire's postulations is that in the education process, individuals learn through a group-based process. As regards the critical articulation between the individual and the group, Freire asserts that people only transcend their subjectivity to become agents of change once they understand their own experience in relation to a broader context. It is appropriate education which conscientises people, allowing them to realise their capacity as agents to shape their environments (1976). As Freire writes:

> Because they are not limited to the natural (biological) sphere but participate in the creative dimension as well, men [sic] can intervene in reality in order to change it (1976: 4).

The questions remain: who decides on what is appropriate; who controls the selection process; who steers the discussions? These questions are not posed to undermine the efforts of dedicated educationalists that do empower people, but merely to identify their subjectivity in the educational process. As Versfeld writes:

> While asserting the autonomy of the individual in taking action this pedagogy is not admitting to the ideological constraints it is placing on the conscious individual ... People are being encouraged to talk of their own experiences but their thinking about these is being steered in a particular direction (1990: 21).

Thus even Gramsci's organic intellectuals (who sometimes occupy the positions of facilitators in educational NGOs) bring subjectivity to educational contexts. This is not necessarily a negative phenomenon but a factor which can only be dealt with if there is a commitment by educationalists within service organisations to do so.

3.3.2.2 Problem-posing education and the issue of empowerment

This discussion raises the issue of the educational approach adopted by "facilitators". Freire counter-poses the "banking" and the "problem-posing" approaches where the former is concerned only with "narrating" content to learners, and the latter, with the actual two-way process of "transmission" which is premised on a "resolution of the teacher-student contradiction" (1972: 46 - 56). Freire asserts the problem-posing approach as revolutionary and argues that it "does not and cannot serve the interests of the oppressor" (1972: 58-9). Versfeld criticises this view arguing that under conditions of self-directed learning it is still the teacher's role to facilitate the process "providing support and resources where appropriate and [fostering] social skills of co-operation and communication". She goes on to say that

> the problem-solving approach is not the solution to liberatory education as the banking approach is not the sole process for domestication. [The former] could, in fact, be used as a powerful tool of domestication as people consider themselves to be acting on free will while they are in fact being moulded into a particular world-view (1990: 23 - 25).

This reraises the 'subjectivity' and power of the facilitator. It also signals that the issues of content and process are intricately linked and both open to manipulation within the realm of socialisation. It is those groups who steer the process who hold greatest power in these contexts. How they choose to share that power depends on the ways in which they interact with users and learners and the ways in which 'contracts' etc are constructed. These issues will be dealt with in more concrete terms in chapter five.

Freire's problem-posing pedagogy calls for greater dialogue in the educational process arguing that teachers can also learn from students

yielding a more democratic process. He does state, however, that 'authority' remains an issue, albeit "on the side of freedom" (1972: 53). In a dialogue between Freire and Shor, the latter critiques Freire's "romantic" notion of equality in the teacher-student relation explaining that

> The teacher is different from and not equal to the students, even as we practice democratic relations in the class-room ... The dialogic teacher is more intellectually developed, more practiced in critical scrutiny, and more committed to a political dream of social change, than are the students. The teacher is different not only by virtue of his or her training but also because the teacher leads a transformation that will not happen in class by itself (Shor & Freire, 1987: 94-5).

This suggests that while facilitators may be sensitised to the problematic of 'unequal' student-teacher relations, and while they can minimise the power-relation or inequality, they cannot wish it away. It is important to note, however, that empowerment of learners can happen and does occur despite unequal relations in the education environment. Nonetheless, Ellsworth points out that despite their awareness of "critical pedagogy", facilitators sometimes do "perpetuate relations of domination" (1989: 298). She argues that unless facilitators have witnessed student experiences first-hand, they cannot entirely identify with and express learners' experiences, but because teachers are in a dominant position in the learning environment, learners' experiences remain unexplored and the power-relation between teachers and learners is reinforced. As Versfeld explains, while "a teacher may learn from her students, learners will have had experiences which the teacher and other learners can never experience and so never know" (1990: 29). In this way, educators remain 'in authority' in determining the agendas in educational settings. As Ellsworth argues,

> critical pedagogues have acknowledged the socially constructed and legitimated authority that teachers hold over students [yet they] have failed to launch any meaningful

> analysis of or programme for re-formulating the institutionalised power imbalances between themselves and their students ... In the absence of such an analysis and programme, their efforts are limited to trying to transform negative effects of power imbalances within the classroom into positive ones. Strategies such as student empowerment and dialogue give the illusion of equality while in fact leaving the authoritarian nature of the teacher/student relationship intact (1989: 306).

These contributions prompt questions about the extent to which service organisations and activists are able to transform knowledge-power relations and truly empower users. The above argument by Ellsworth suggests that learners can only really empower themselves. However, these arguments do not undermine the role of intellectuals and/or service work. On the contrary, while these roles are being challenged, they are not being under-valued.

In an attempt to address the empowerment problem, instead of the "dialogue" which Freire encourages between teachers and learners (or information mediators and users) as the basis of democratic education, assuming that all are sufficiently skilled and able to participate in that dialogue, Ellsworth calls for "classroom practices that confront the power dynamics inside and outside of our classroom that made democratic dialogue impossible" (1989: 315). She writes that:

> Dialogue in its conventional sense is impossible in the culture at large because at this historical moment, power relations between raced, classed and gendered students and teachers are unjust. The injustice of these relations and the way in which those injustices distort communication cannot be overcome in a classroom...(1989: 316).

However, she notes that conditions which render the classroom an 'unsafe' space for students to feel entirely open to communication, cannot be entirely overcome in the classroom and that social interactions outside the classroom setting are extremely important to building greater trust and communication between participants. Again this raises issues of the need

for users of information services to feel at ease with the culture and politics of these organisations. These problems of the interface between service organisations and their users are dealt with in some detail in chapter five.

The above problematisation of the empowerment process prompts further questions: can the reality of an unbalanced power relation between teachers and learners be used in ways that lead to greater empowerment of both groups, and should a goal be equity in the power relation or a recognition of different roles for teachers and students in the education process with a view to articulating these so that both parties gain? These questions seek to acknowledge the reality of the unique but potentially complementary positions which facilitators and learners assume in relation to each other. The partners both form part of an educational "system" and cannot be viewed in isolation of each other. The above remarks caution for great sensitivity on the part of facilitators who are positioned in this system to wield significant power.

3.3.2.3 The process of conscientisation and its link to action

The issue of conscientisation still remains unexplored. Freire states that:

> conscientisation is the process by which in the subjective-objective relationship, the subject finds the ability to grasp, in critical terms the dialectical unity between self and object. That is why we reaffirm that there is not conscientisation outside of praxis, outside of the theory-practice, reflection-action unity (1985: 160).

He further argues that "the act of knowing" involves praxis or "a dialectical movement that goes from action to reflection and from reflection upon action to a new action" (1985: 50). It is the couplet of knowledge (which includes learning through reflection) and action which leads to

transformation. But how do people learn through reflection? Learners are encouraged to express issues of immediate concern or to develop notions of these either through discussion or around other creative practices such as role-play. Theories begin to emerge around these discussions and are employed to re-examine the experiences more critically. But, argues Versfeld, knowledge and dialogue do not necessarily lead to action or "provide learners with the ability to act" (1990: 32). However, empowerment is not only about content and process, it is also about enskilling and enabling learners to act more independently. It is about promoting self-reliance and a greater sense of ownership of processes of acquiring and creating knowledge. Versfeld argues that while "dialogical learning ... may be a more effective way of internalising understanding, it cannot claim to empower people in their dealings with the outside world. Education may facilitate the process but people can only finally empower themselves for authentic political action" (1990: 33). This view endorses that expressed earlier by Ellsworth. However, Freire promotes the notion of praxis as an approach to facilitating empowerment and since the latter is a broad concept which encompasses 'enskilling' and does not strictly imply political action, his claim is not invalid. Implicit in his view is the belief that learners will be empowered through problem-posing education - a stance which has been critiqued by both Versfeld and Ellsworth, as noted above.

With regard to promoting action, it should be noted that service organisations on their own are incapable of achieving action and should be understood to operate in a milieu of mass movements and political organisations which directly instigate political action. The latter of these agencies also steer learners' thinking in particular directions, themselves

involving 'informal' educational processes. As Versfeld writes:

> Consciousness raising can ... be perceived as a process whereby learners become visible to themselves through an understanding (and even appreciation) of the cultural traditions that have influenced their way of understanding ... People may or may not then act upon their new perceptions in order to effect certain changes in their lives and society" (1990: 37).

This challenges the notion that information users necessarily act on information and suggests instead, as noted earlier, that through the educational process, perceptions may develop, and knowledge bases change without political action occurring. But to recall Hayward's earlier comment, political action or any action does not necessarily occur immediately on knowledge bases being transformed. The strategising phase of the education process could occur some time after knowledge is assimilated.

The above discussion again highlights the tension within 'alternative' educational projects which respect and encourage the independent thinking of the individual on the one hand and yet remain committed to espousing particular programmes of social transformation on the other. In fact, their very commitment to political transformation shapes their subjectivity which is an unavoidable feature in the educational domain. As has been argued earlier, subjectivity can be viewed positively (as will be shown again in chapter four). This human element means that alternative agencies can actively assume roles which support and advance the struggles of the democratic movement. This espousal of "non-neutrality" is clearly positive. It is on a much subtler level that subjectivity becomes potentially problematic in the empowerment process since power and the wielding of power are at play. The extent to which this power-relation is opened up in

the educational process should determine the degree to which power can be shared.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has sketched the emergence of 'alternative' information services in the South African context and considered their modus operandi vis-a-vis their approaches to information and education work and their internal work ethic. Democracy and the notion of participation in relation to the practices of these organisations has been described in an attempt to convey an understanding of the paradigm within which these groups operate. The inter-relation between information and education work has been re-emphasised, and the argument made that the creation of dialogical relations between teachers and learners or service providers and users is central to the interactive learning process. In this regard, the issue of empowerment which constitutes a primary objective for service organisations, has been critically discussed and it has been proposed that the knowledge-power relation evident between facilitators and learners or users of a service is an ongoing problematic.

Chapter Four

Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this investigation was to establish the contributions made by two information and education projects to the improvement of information flow among their constituencies. Since the essential work required evaluation studies, the interpretive rather than quantitative methodological approach was favoured. An eclectic approach was adopted combining complementary elements of illuminative and responsive evaluation, as well as the case study method.

The qualitative approach was favoured since the projects investigated involve people, their ideologies and experiences rather than mere factual data which can be quantified. This view is endorsed by Rhode who claims that the "quantitative approach with its emphasis on numbers and its quest for generalization is seen as depersonalising information provision and information use and isolating them from the settings in which they occur" (1986: 64). It can further be argued that since "human factors are central to our concerns", the application of the conventional paradigm - quantitative research - can lead to research results which are (i)"generally less consistent than those produced in the physical sciences"; and (ii)"often not particularly valid in 'real life' contexts" (Ford, 1987: 25). Ford thus calls for more 'illuminative, interpretative paradigms', but cautions that while the results yielded by such studies are valuable, they may not be reliable or replicable (1987:25).

Both illuminative and responsive evaluation have been employed due to their collective emphases on the usefulness of findings or reports produced (Parlett, 1985; Stake, 1985). In this respect it is appreciated that utilisation "means different things to different people in different settings, and is an issue subject to negotiation between evaluators and decision makers" (Patton, 1978: 284).

The case study method which may be defined as "any descriptive or evaluative analysis of a common social unit, a local program, or an agency", has been central to this investigation (Nassimbeni, 1988: 171). It has assisted in focusing the research and facilitated an inquiry into two projects. This method will be considered after more detailed discussion of illuminative and responsive evaluation. These approaches are viewed within the framework of naturalistic or constructivist inquiry, the fundamentals of which echo discussions regarding views of reality discussed in earlier chapters. The methodological approach adopted is thus resonant with some of the issues at the very heart of this investigation such as that of "uncovering knowledge". This will become more apparent in the paragraphs below.

4.2 The constructivist paradigm

Naturalistic inquiry, according to Guba and Lincoln is a "paradigm of inquiry" which differs fundamentally from the scientific or rationalistic paradigm which, they argue, "reflects a discredited epistemology of science - positivism" (1983: 311 - 312). Guba recognises Kuhn's varied uses of the term paradigm and suggests the following general definition: "a basic set of beliefs that guides action, whether of the everyday garden variety or action

taken in connection with a disciplined inquiry" (1990: 17). Kuhn himself writes that those "whose research is based on shared paradigms are committed to the same rules and standards for scientific practice" (1962: 11). Paradigms thus, while they are human constructions, do not have to be consciously adopted or ascribed to, but nonetheless inform the way people act. In an earlier work, Lincoln and Guba argue that alternative paradigms are distinguished by their oppositional axioms. They define paradigms as "axiomatic systems characterised by their differing sets of assumptions about the phenomena into which they are designed to inquire", and distinguish the naturalistic from the rationalistic paradigm on the following five counts:

the nature of reality

the inquirer-objective relationship

the nature of truth statements

attribution/explanation of action

the role of values in inquiry (1983: 313 - 322).

Table 18–1. Axiomatic Differences Between the Rationalistic and Naturalistic Paradigms

Axioms About	*Rationalistic Paradigm*	*Naturalistic Paradigm*
Reality	Single, tangible, convergent, fragmentable	Multiple, intangible divergent, holistic
Inquirer/respondent relationship	Independent	Inter-related
Nature of truth statements	Context-free generalizations — nomothetic statements — focus on similarities	Context-bound working hypotheses — idiographic statements — focus on differences
Attribution/explanation of action	Real causes; temporally precedent or simultaneous; manipulable; probabilistic.	Attributional shapers; interactive (feed-forward and feed-back): non-manipulable; plausible.
Relation to Values to Inquiry	Value-free	Value-bound

Note: In certain of our previous writing (Guba, 1978, 1981; Guba & Lincoln, 1981) we have focussed on only the first three of these five axioms. However, the latter two now seem to us as equally if not more important.

Figure 1: Axiomatic differences between the rationalistic and naturalistic paradigms (Guba & Lincoln, 1983: 316).

Naturalistic inquiry investigates phenomena in the social/behavioural sciences in their natural settings or real-life contexts - a feature which aids its attempt to convey the reality of experiences being researched. Within this framework, it does not seek to control variables, but to 'illuminate' ✓ them and to convey processes observed and involved in investigation. It thus also pays great attention to the role of the researcher in the inquiry.

The interesting bearing which naturalistic inquiry has on this study extends far beyond its applicability as a methodological framework. The premises of

the paradigm, what Lincoln and Guba call the axioms, correlate with the earlier conceptual arguments regarding meaning production, constructions of reality, individual subjectivity and agency. Naturalistic inquiry posits that individuals construct realities and asserts that there are therefore multiple realities of given situations. On this understanding, viz. that individuals are agents acting not only with unique perceptions but with special constructions of reality, the paradigm holds that the subjectivity of inquirers is as valid and apparent in research processes as that of respondents. Here the proponents of the theory make interesting observations which correspond closely to those made in chapter three regarding "interaction" in the construction of knowledge. They state that the "reactivity of subjects" (or respondents) in the social and behavioural sciences is generally acknowledged, but argue further that inquirers are also subjectively involved in processes of investigation. They say that it is "precisely this interactivity that makes it possible for the inquirer to be a smart instrument, honing in on relevant facts and ideas by virtue of his [sic] sensitivity" (1983: 318 - 319).

Lincoln and Guba's analysis of the different approaches to 'knowledge' from within the rationalistic and naturalistic paradigms is instructive for this study both in the light it sheds on the concept at an abstract level, as well as the perspective it provides for the way in which knowledge has been acquired by the researcher in this study. Both these authors and Stake draw on the work of Polanyi to distinguish between propositional and tacit knowledge. Simply put, the former is that "which can be cast into language forms (sentences)" while the latter comprises "intuitions, apprehensions, 'vibes'" (Guba & Lincoln, 1983: 324). However, in order to communicate with an audience, naturalists convert tacit into propositional knowledge so that they

can bring their meanings across. Propositional knowledge is also generally associated with explanations of events while tacit knowledge is gained through experience. The knowledge types are however not oppositional and could be seen as complementary. Tacit knowledge which, as Stake explains, gives "rise to new meanings, new ideas, and new applications of the old" (1980: 66), could well enhance the explanations for phenomena. In this way, intuition can enrich propositional knowledge.

For the purposes of this study, a crucial and useful distinction between the two knowledge-types relates to the way in which knowledge is acquired in the different paradigms of inquiry, i.e. to their respective tools of understanding. Naturalists tend to rely heavily on the human-as-instrument precisely because of the flexibility and insight which they bring to an inquiry concerned not so much with explanation as with illumination. Rationalists on the other hand prefer non-human instruments which are presumed to be impartial because of their aspiration towards "objectivity". The distinction is of further value in its contribution to the discussion of knowledge acquisition and meaning production which is expanded upon in chapter two. Naturalistic inquiry thus provides a useful and instructive frame for this study. Its optimistic recognition of the subjectivity of the inquirer is insightful for the prior problematisation of the knowledge-power relation in the education work of service organisations as discussed in chapter three. The fact that subjectivity is seen as "the only means of unlocking the constructions held by individuals" and the view that if "realities exist only in respondents' minds, subjective interaction seems to be the only way to access them" allows the researcher to enter the investigation and to interact in the research process as a constructor, an interpreter and a rapporteur

(Guba, 1990: 26). While these roles traditionally emphasise the 'negative' stigmas of subjectivity such as opportunism, interventionism, bias and a 'hidden agenda' scenario, they open up the possibilities for the inquirer to bring personal insight, experience and skills into the research domain. These human qualities can assist in illuminating themes and issues in ways that promote progress (cf section 4.4.1 for ways of countering subjectivity in naturalistic inquiry).

4.3 Illuminative and responsive evaluation

The following discussion on illuminative and responsive evaluation identifies critical areas such as negotiation and reporting which speak to the subjective or human nature of constructivist inquiry. It is interesting to note that the two evaluation approaches evolved "quite independently" on different continents (Simons, 1980: 4-5). Illuminative evaluation is one of a number of approaches which emanated in Britain due to "dissatisfaction with existing models of evaluation which failed to meet the needs of the programme and the audiences for whom the evaluation was intended". Responsive evaluation developed similarly as one of a number of "alternative styles" in the United States (Simons, 1980: 4-5).

4.3.1 The illuminative approach

Illuminative evaluation was first espoused by Parlett and Hamilton who formulated its premises in the early 1970's (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 1985: 285). It is a holistic, integrated approach to 'viewing' and 'interpreting' practices, situations, systems, programmes, problems, experiences, etc. in ways that are useful to targeted audiences. In this respect, the approach aims to be responsive to users of the evaluation - reports are written in

accessible ways, investigations are brief and evaluators are sensitive to organisational dynamics such as issues of "trust". The approach is flexible and strategic in that researchers draw on resources and opportunities which the situation being investigated presents. The intention is to contribute "to decision-making by providing information, comments and analysis to increase relevant knowledge and understanding ... to provide a distillation of local thinking ... and to draw threads together in such a way as to sharpen discussion, disentangle complexities, isolate the significant from the trivial, and raise the level of sophistication of debate" (Parlett, 1985: 2395 - 2396). The approach is framed by systems theory in that studies are concerned with entire webs of relationships and the interconnectedness of phenomena. Illuminative evaluation thus marks a shift from mechanistic theories which are often rooted in uni-dimensional 'cause and effect' models. Instead, it emphasises "multiple causality" and accepts the complexity of inter-relationships which the evaluator seeks to unravel. Studies are conducted naturalistically, i.e. systems are investigated in their natural environments illuminating both chance and peculiar as well as expected factors. Essentially, the approach aims to throw light upon or illuminate the problems, characteristics and unique features of a given system within the context of its coherence and integration. It investigates the 'special' nature of systems. Due to its heuristic nature, i.e. the study's unfolding strategy plan, there is no blue-print for such investigations. Situations and conditions give rise to the choice of techniques adopted so that these are suitable to the nature of the problems being investigated. Thus as Parlett notes: "Illuminative evaluations ... have a custom-built plan of study, rather than one 'off the shelf', one which acknowledges the programme's specialised features, the requirements and interests of policy makers, and the

constraints, resources, and boundary conditions relating to the particular study" (1985: 2396).

Progressive focussing is a feature of illuminative evaluation and a process whereby through the course of the evaluation, certain themes are built up or emerge as the primary foci of a study. It thus becomes apparent that as the study unfolds or evolves, themes emerge and become refined providing the areas of concentration for the study. The act of focussing on themes does not preclude the possibility of adding new themes through the process of the study. Progressive focussing does however provide the researcher with a clear sense of the matters to be investigated and hence with direction for the study. Parlett likens the illuminative evaluator to an historian charged with documenting an account of a war, inundated with materials and varying perspectives. He writes:

> Progressive focussing on selected themes provides the management criteria for channelling investigative resources and also reduces the likelihood of data overload and not being able to see the wood for the trees ... The illuminative evaluator has the same obligation as the historian to make judicious selections, devise a manageable structure, and impose intelligent form and meaning to material he or she has gathered (1985: 2398).

4.3.2 The responsive approach

Responsive evaluation formulated by Robert Stake, is closely related to illuminative evaluation finding consensus in their similar approaches to and mutual identification of issues for consideration in evaluation studies. Responsive evaluation does not pose hypotheses, but rather identifies conceptual issues around which the evaluation develops. As happened in the cases investigated, the evaluator "inquires, negotiates and selects a few issues around which to organise the study" (Stake, 1985: 4349). In this

respect, it does not aim to be exhaustive, but is selective in its consideration of 'some' relevant issues identified through progressive focusing. According to Stake, it is "an approach that sacrifices some precision in measurement, hopefully to increase the usefulness of the findings to persons in and around the program" (1983: 292).

Responsive evaluation (like illuminative evaluation) is concerned with the activities rather than the intentions of a programme, seeks to provide information which targeted audiences require and can use, and reports the different value perspectives of people involved with the programme, throwing light upon rather than underplaying or overshadowing these. In this regard, it moves away from preordinate evaluation which is concerned with programme objects and goals and is most concerned with communicating findings or information to targeted groups in ways that are appropriate and useful. Stake displays the various components of the responsive approach through the circular diagrammatic presentation in Figure 2 below. He explains that the events recur throughout the process and are non-sequential: an event could trigger or be followed by any other depending on the nature of the unfolding process (1985: 235-238). Thus the 'clock' should not suggest only a clockwise, but also an anti- and a cross-clockwise motion.

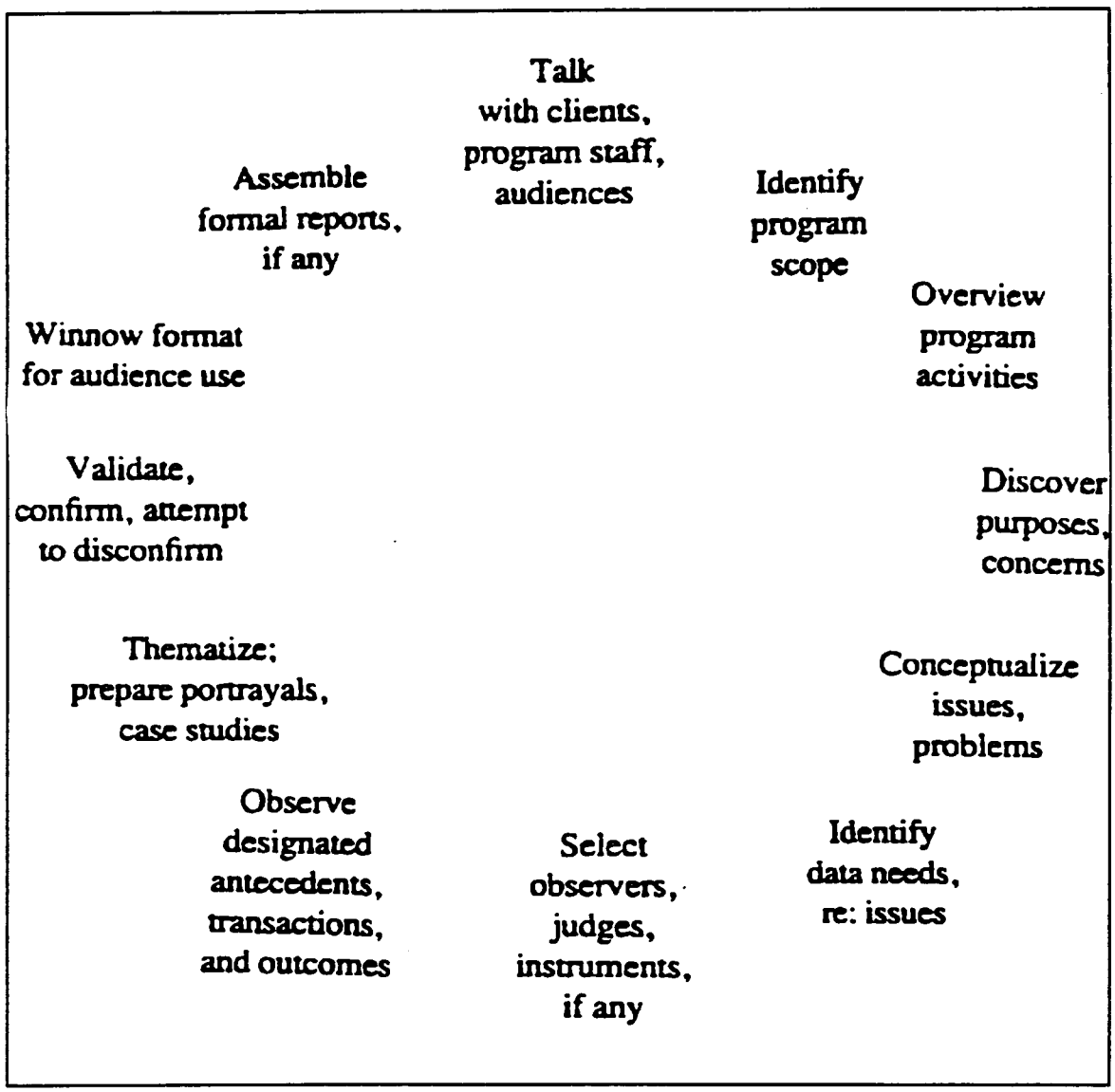

Figure 2: Prominent events in a responsive evaluation (Stake, 1983: 298).

Within the 'responsive approach' the evaluator's subjectivity is recognised - it is s/he who selects, observes and interprets. "The use of the interpretative human insight and skills is, indeed, encouraged rather than discouraged" (Parlett & Dearden, 1977: 21). Attempts are made to utilise rather than reject this subjective element, e.g. evaluators try to illuminate their personal observations and comments by making these most apparent.

Both illuminative and responsive evaluation, because they are not interested in 'proving' or 'testing' hypotheses, do not attempt to control any variables. The approaches come into their own precisely in their "telling it as it is". The evaluator attempts to enrich audience understanding and appreciation of programmes by portraying and communicating conditions as extensively as possible. As Stake notes:

> We need to portray complexity. We need to convey the holistic impression, the mood, even the mystery of the experience. The programme staff or people in the community may be uncertain. The audience should feel that uncertainty. More ambiguity rather than less may be needed in our reports. Oversimplification obfuscates (1983: 300).

4.4 The case study method

Both illuminative and responsive evaluation are utilisation-focused aiming to provide users with greater understandings of and insights into problems. Case study is a way of entering into particular experiences to deepen insights into them. The case study method is a particularly useful way of carrying out the afore-mentioned evaluation approaches.

Case study can be described as "an umbrella term for a family of research methods having in common the decision to focus an inquiry around an instance" (Adelman, Jenkins & Kemmis, 1980: 48). In this respect, it is a study of the uniqueness of an instance even where the intention is to understand the instance as representative of a class. It offers a "surrogate experience and invites the reader to underwrite the account, by appealing to his [sic] tacit knowledge of human situations" (Adelman, Jenkins & Kemmis, 1980: 52). Case study thus incorporates not only the interpretive and intuitive qualities of researchers, but also those of audiences, respondents and readers of reports. There is therefore a consistency in the way the

method views 'subjectivity', attributing this characteristic to all those who come into contact with the research.

4.4.1 Approaches to subjectivity and reporting

This sub-section considers subjectivity on two levels, viz, in terms of (a)the extent to which subjectivity allows readers to gain from investigations through their identification with certain phenomena, and (b)the researcher's difficulty in dealing with his/her subjectivity in the research process.

Stake draws on the work of Wilhelm Dilthey, an anti-positivist German philosopher who claimed that the "human sciences are ... founded on...[a] relationship between experience, expression and understanding", to argue that studies in the social and behavioural sciences should "capitalise upon the natural powers of people to experience and understand" (1983: 280). Dilthey's proposition is not unlike Piaget's structuralist model discussed in chapter three. Both Piaget and Dilthey suggest that the best way for people to learn from reports is through their ability to identify with their content. This presupposes that if reports are indeed to embody utility, they should "speak" to their audiences in accessible ways.

As noted earlier, Lincoln and Guba are positive about the subjective quality of the researcher. To recall their afore-mentioned statement, they say that it is "precisely this interactivity that makes it possible for the inquirer to be a smart instrument, honing in on relevant facts and ideas by virtue of his [sic] sensitivity" (1983: 318-9). With regard to the issue of the investigator's value perspective, Guba and Lincoln write:

> While he [sic] cannot eliminate value effects ... he [sic] endeavours to set up whatever safeguards he [sic] can, to expose and explicate the values whenever possible, and to test

> insofar as he [sic] can for value resonance [which refers to the] problems, paradigm, theory and context [exhibiting] internal coherence, value-fit, and congruence in order for the inquiry to be deemed appropriate and fitting, and in order to produce meaningful findings ... the naturalist's propensity for grounding his inquiry provides a virtual guarantee of value resonance, since the subject's constructions and the substantive theory are both extracted from the data rather than laid on them (1983: 322-3).

4.4.2 Generalisability of the case

It is generally held that the case study is not a good basis for generalisation. Falling, as they often do, within the realm of the naturalistic paradigm, Stake argues that often there is a "need for generalisation about that particular case or generalisation to a similar case rather than generalisation to a population of cases ... As readers recognise essential similarities to cases of interest to them, they establish the basis for naturalistic generalisation" (1983: 283). Similarly, Adelman, Jenkins and Kemmis adopt an interesting approach to the issue of generalisation arguing that "the generalisations produced in case study are no less legitimate when about the instance, rather than about the class from which the instance is drawn (i.e. generalising about the case, rather than from it)" (1980: 48).

Grounded theory which is a "means for deriving theory, not simply a means for processing data" also pertain: issues can be drawn from the investigation of the case (a)to promote deliberation of them, and (b)to formulate new ideas and abstractions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 339; cf section 4.6 which discusses the 'constant comparative method' for an understanding of how theory is grounded in research findings).

This argument is not presented in defence of the 'non-generalisable' nature of the cases to all other instances, but merely to highlight the value of

understanding issues in their context or the settings of their formulations. Such context-setting in the portrayal of the complexity of systems, enriches and deepens understandings of issues in a study and increases the chances of improving systems holistically. The practice of generalisation is thus not about replication but entails the abstraction of salient issues and features of the case which are possibly akin to or pertinent to other instances. This point is exemplified in chapter five.

The problem of generalisation is aided by Adelman, Jenkins and Kemmis' categorisation of types of case study research. They argue that the latter "always involves the study of an instance in action", a postulation which calls for clarification of the relationship between the instance and the class from which it derives (1980: 49). They suggest that an instance is either drawn from a class to discuss an issue, or that a case or "bounded system" is investigated within which issues are investigated to yield greater understanding of the case. In the former type generalisations are made about the class, in the latter type, about the case. Since the cases in this study were chosen to investigate a particular problem, they constitute instances drawn from a class which implies that generalisations could be made about the class. However, in the course of the evaluation process, the uniqueness of the cases became evident and generalisation became less of a concern. This scenario is presented as a possibility by Adelman and his co-authors: "during the conduct of the study the description of the case will increasingly emphasise its uniqueness ... the study will transcend the principle of selection (i.e. selecting the instance as representative of a given class) and become a study of a unique case" (1980: 50). They conclude that in this event, the basis of generalisation changes. In this study, the

concern shifted from generalising from the instance to the class towards generalising about the case.

4.4.3 Access, confidentiality and negotiation

The issues of access, confidentiality and negotiating the evaluation brief are all pertinent to this investigation. They are significant since programme staff have to agree to the terms of the study to ensure their cooperation. Programme staff have a stake in the evaluation and should proclaim a sense of ownership of the process which will not only increase their commitment to the investigation, but which will also enable them to take ownership of outcomes and strategise around these without having to rely on the evaluator. The evaluator also has to be acceptable and have credibility so that staff have faith in both his/her ability to produce a "reliable" report, and indeed, to undertake the evaluation.

As Adelman notes, "case study used in evaluation is not merely a means of reporting but raises very sharply those central issues of access and confidentiality" (1984: 3). Illuminative and responsive evaluation, which emphasise process rather than product, underscore the need for adoption of these as living principles throughout the evaluation process as investigators negotiate their way through different programme facets to improve understanding. For instance, initial access to a programme does not automatically imply access to its clients - a feature which may have to be negotiated at a later stage. Similarly, confidentiality may apply at different stages in a study, e.g. respondents to interviews may wish to check their transcripts before these are synthesized and discussed with a broader audience.

Eraut cautions that evaluators could either maintain too much independence or become overly involved in programmes being evaluated. In the former instance, too much emphasis is placed on the "research role", and in the latter, the evaluator assumes the role of a "change agent" (1984: 39). He suggests that to overcome this problem, negotiation be based on four main principles:

> 1. The evaluator will find it difficult to develop relationships and gain access to information without declaring his [sic] purpose and procedures; and a willingness to negotiate will usually improve his [sic] chances;
>
> 2. increased participation in evaluation policy is likely to result in increased attention to evaluation results;
>
> 3. people have a right to know what an evaluator is doing and why;
>
> 4. all those who might reasonably be considered as clients have a right to some stake in the evaluation enterprise (1984: 39).

These principles underline the importance of negotiation emphasising the need for the evaluator to maintain a "balanced" role. The equilibrium is desirable so that researchers are able to "represent different value positions, ideologies, and opinions encountered in the course of the investigation; and, moreover, to represent them in ways considered fair by those holding these positions" (Parlett & Dearden, 1972: 33). It is in this respect that Eraut's principles also move beyond a simple concern with the centrality of negotiation to improve access for the evaluator. His principles emphasise the rights of all stake holders and introduces a notion of collaboration and 'partnership' in evaluation ventures. If evaluation studies are indeed to meet the objectives of responsive and illuminative evaluation in aiding decision-making, they must attain 'client' participation and be interactive.

Eraut's view of independence should, however, not be conflated with Simons's "independent evaluation" which she uses to distinguish certain studies from others which are commissioned by a programme and/or its funders. She argues that in independent evaluations, evaluators "should be free in the conduct of the evaluation to report events and different value perspectives fairly, accurately and impartially...[and] to make results of the evaluation accessible to all groups who have a right to knowledge about the programme (though who precisely these groups are in any one context may need to be negotiated)" (1984: 57 - 58). Her comments are in keeping with those made earlier regarding the centrality of negotiation throughout the course of the evaluation process, prompting recollection of the non-sequential movement of Stake's "evaluation clock".

4.4.4 Reflexivity and the failed case

Reflexivity is understood as reflecting on one's experience, or research "bending back on itself" with the proviso that the self and the experience also be understood as "socially constructed" (Steier, 1991a: 2). Reflexivity constitutes part of constructivist theory and has been employed in this study in an attempt to make sense of the unfolding nature of one of the cases which resulted in failure when considered against the backdrop of its initially designed course. Since reflexivity is practised within the constructivist paradigm, the subjectivity of the researcher is noted. Thus Steier states that "constructivist inquiry, as a human activity, must concern itself with a knowing process as embedded in a reflexive loop that includes the inquirer who is at once an active observer" (1991b: 163). It is for this reason that in reflecting on the construction of a research experience, the researcher is of necessity 'self-reflexive'.

On the issue of failure, it should be noted that while the concept of "the failed case" has not been extensively written about as such, the concept is referred to by authors such as Steier (1991b) and Morphet (1987) in their accounts of case research. Failed cases refer to those studies which 'derail' from their plotted designs for whatever reasons. Reflexivity allows the investigator to seek an understanding of what caused the derailing to occur. Through contemplation, the researcher is able to revisit the research scene, as it were, to investigate the divergent realities of informants and researcher alike which led to a 'skewing' of the research plan. Reflexivity allows the researcher to follow the 'new' research path and to tell a different story or relate a different conversation to that initially intended. The fact of failure, however, as Morphet notes, raises a set of different questions for the researcher who has to decide how to investigate the outcome, i.e. which questions to consider (1987: 137). One of the overriding questions in the ERIP investigation was whether or not to investigate failure of the study only in terms of the transaction itself, in other words, limiting the contemplative investigation to questions of the objectives, methods, and implementation of the study, or whether to consider failure in the context of the broader milieu in which the study occurred. As will be seen from documentation of the case in chapter five, the latter approach which attempted to consider factors beyond those pertaining to the design of the study, was adopted. However, it should be noted that this more inclusive, illuminative approach was curtailed by the researcher's inability to be exhaustive in investigating influential issues in the complex social milieu of the research.

4.5 Methods and sources used for the gathering and

analysing of data

4.5.1 Documentary evidence

Documentary sources which detailed each organisation's operations, decisions and procedures were examined to provide an understanding of historical developments and shifts which occurred within the organisations being investigated. In this regard, minutes of meetings and discussions, as well as annual and evaluation reports were studied.

4.5.2 Discussion meetings

Meetings were held with each of the organisations, at times separately and at times jointly, to assist in ensuring that the research being undertaken was of relevance to their work. These meetings also provided direction for the research and forums for the feedback of findings and outputs stemming from the research process. At some of these meetings, evaluation strategies were discussed and procedures agreed upon.

4.5.3 Interviews

Interviews were conducted to gauge the opinions and insights of both organisational users and staff. The user interviews comprised the user surveys which are referred to in chapter five. Interview schedules which were listings of questions to be put to interviewees, were used as guides to the interviews. Respondents were provided with copies of these schedules before-hand so that the interviews were as transparent as possible. Most of the interviews were tape-recorded so that notes taken during the interviews could be checked for accuracy and transcripts produced. These transcripts were subjected to member checks and triangulation to confirm their

accuracy and reliability. In this way, the problem of interviewer bias to which Bell refers, was controlled (1987: 73).

4.5.4 Triangulation

Within the context of case study research, the call for the presentation of "different value perspectives" and for "reliability" of reports, encourages the use of 'triangulation' as a means to 'verifying' information gathered. This technique involves a "follow-up" procedure in which data is cross-checked for accuracy, e.g. "discrepancies between accounts will need pursuing; 'facts' need cross checking; critical incidents must be identified" (Adelman, Jenkins and Kemmis, 1980: 56).

This approach does not attempt to neutralise the 'interpretive' quality of the inquirer, which has already been asserted as a positive feature of naturalistic inquiry. It does however 'democratise' the research process by validating data so that the subjectivity of the evaluator is made more apparent, more of an entity and less of an unknown.

4.5.5 Member checking

Member checking was a further technique used in this study to enhance its credibility among research participants and to promote confidence among readers of the report. Member checking is a process whereby interpretations and conclusions which constitute part of research findings are put back to respondents from whom the information was obtained, for verification. It allows research participants an opportunity to react to the reconstructions of their inputs to the research process. Despite the utilisation of such verificatory techniques, Lincoln and Guba caution that since "naturalistic

inquiry operates as an open system, no amount of member checking, triangulation, persistent observation, auditing, or whatever can ever compel; it can at best persuade" (1985: 329). Nonetheless, member checking was adopted for the purposes of validating data which comprise the very bases upon which findings and interpretations are posited. The following are among the purposes of member checking:

- it provides the opportunity to assess intentionality;
- it gives the respondent an immediate opportunity to correct errors of fact and challenge what are perceived to be wrong interpretations;
- it provides the respondent the opportunity to volunteer additional information;
- it puts the respondent on record as having said certain things and having agreed to the correctness of the investigator's recording of them;
- it provides an opportunity to summarise - the first step along the way to data analysis;
- it provides the respondent an opportunity to give an assessment of overall adequacy in addition to confirming individual data points (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 314).

4.5.6 Selection and sampling

While the programmes investigated allowed for interviewing of the entire staff complements due to the workable size of these units, the interviewing of users required selection. LeCompte and Preissle define selection as "a more general process of focussing and choosing what to study" while they describe sampling as a "more specialised and restricted form" (1993: 57). They assert that:

> Ethnographers ... use selection and sampling to define the initial population so it can be handled conceptually and logistically ... also ... to expand the scope of the study, refine the questions or constructs under investigation, or generate new lines of inquiry ... Although some phenomena can be identified and characterised as being salient prior to entering

> the field, many others emerge only as the fieldwork proceeds (1993: 65).

Lincoln and Guba argue that "all sampling is done with some purpose in mind" and state that there are types of sampling other than random or representative sampling which "serve purposes other than facilitating generalisation" (1985: 199-200). These they list as:

- sampling extreme or deviant cases;
- sampling typical cases;
- maximum variation sampling;
- sampling critical cases;
- sampling politically important or sensitive cases;
- convenience sampling (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 200-201).

Whereas the ERIP case never reached the stage of user surveys, the basis for selection of users in the ILRIG case were typical, maximum variant and critical case sampling as can be seen in more detail in chapter five. Furthermore, the purpose behind sampling was to produce findings or to maximise information from which theory could be generated. The criteria for "theoretical sampling" which Glaser and Strauss use are those of "theoretical purpose and relevance - not of structural circumstances" (1967: 48). Their primary purpose is to "generate theory" as opposed to establishing "verifications with the facts" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967: 48). They further state that:

> The criteria of theoretical sampling are designed to be applied in the ongoing joint collection and analysis of data associated with the generation of theory. Therefore, they are continually

> tailored to fit the data and are applied judiciously at the right point and moment in the analysis. The analyst can continually adjust his [sic] control of data collection to ensure the data's relevance to impersonal criteria of his [sic] emerging theory (1967: 48).

4.6 Interpreting the data

Once data has been gathered for the purposes of generating theories, the volume of evidence has to be processed. Authors propose different ways of dealing with and interpreting data. Those arguing within the naturalistic paradigm agree that the interpretation of data goes way beyond a simple description of that observed. LeCompte and Preissle suggest that: "Qualitative researchers may fail to recognise the implications of a study until sufficient time and distance permit data to be re-examined in less immediate more dispassionate ways" (1993: 267).

Prior to, or as part of the generation of theory, the actual process of analysing data involves a number of procedures. Lincoln and Guba propose a process of inductive data analysis which may be defined as "a process for 'making sense' of field data" by analysing it inductively, i.e. "from specific, raw units of information to subsuming categories of information" (1985: 202-3). Thus inductive data analysis aims, in accordance with the notion of grounded theory, to postulate theories and ideas on the basis of the synthesis of the various units of unprocessed information gathered during the research study. The techniques or subprocesses entailed in inductive data analysis are unitising and categorising. Unitising is likened to "coding" of data and involves the systematic classification of raw information into units which are best understood as "single pieces of information that stand by themselves, i.e. that are interpretable in the absence of any additional information" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 203). Unitising is a subprocess which

is associated with categorising in that the latter is premised on the former entailing the organisation of unitised information into "categories that provide descriptive or inferential information about the context or setting from which the units were derived" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 203). In other words categories encapsulate units of commonality or units which contain information that holds together or that are akin. As the process of categorisation unfolds, the researcher is able to propose a rule which can determine the inclusion or exclusion of units in a category. In other words, rules or guide-lines (aspects or theory) emanate from the process of 'sorting', and are not a priori givens. Glaser and Strauss describe categorisation under the header: "the constant comparative method", and identify four stages in the process which lead to the generation of theory. These are:

(1) comparing incidents applicable to each category;

(2) integrating categories and their properties;

(3) delimiting the theory; and

(4) writing the theory.

In relation to these stages they explain that:

> Although this method of generating theory is a continuously growing process - each stage after a time is transformed into the next - earlier stages do remain in operation simultaneously throughout the analysis and each provides continuous development into its successive stage until the analysis is terminated (1967: 105).

The first stage involves a process of classifying units of data into emergent categories of analysis. While Glaser and Strauss (1967) attend only briefly

to the process of unitisation, Lincoln and Guba (1985) provide greater guidance, as noted earlier. They place strong emphasis on the analyst's confidence in employing tacit knowledge in making judgements in the process of unitising and categorising (1985: 340-1). The theoretical properties of categories become generated through the constant comparison of different units of data within the category. Among the emergent properties of the categories "the analyst will discover two kinds: those that he has constructed himself; and those that have been abstracted from the language of the research situation" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967: 107). In other words, both descriptive and explanatory categories and properties of categories emerge (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 341).

The second stage of the comparative method involves a shift in focus so that instead of comparing units or incidents within a category to check them for "alikeness", incidents are compared to the properties or rules which have emerged for the particular category in which the unit has been located. The idea behind this subprocess of constant comparison of incidents with properties of a category is to result in integration of the properties within categories and categories within themselves as well as in relation to other categories. As Guba and Lincoln explain:

> The process not only becomes more rule-orientated but at the same time tests the properties; if new incidents fail to exhibit some of the properties, perhaps they ought not to be used to define the category, perhaps a subcategory is needed, or perhaps the category needs to be redefined" (1985: 342).

Thus, write Glaser and Strauss, "the theory develops as different categories and their properties tend to become integrated through constant comparisons that force the analyst to make some related theoretical sense of each comparison" (1967: 109). Glaser and Strauss further suggest that it

is advantageous to combine the collecting and processing of data, integration and cohesion of the categories, and hence of the theory, will emerge more easily (1967: 109).

Delimitation of the theory occurs with increased comparison of the categories since there is improved articulation between and integration of categories which become clearly and sufficiently defined. The theory

> solidifies in the sense that major modifications become fewer and fewer as the analyst compares the next incidents of a category to its properties. Later modifications are mainly on the order of clarifying the logic, taking out non-relevant properties, integrating elaborating details of properties into the major outline of interrelated categories and - most important, reduction, [i.e. reduction of the number of concepts used in the theory] (Glaser & Strauss, 1967: 110).

Thus in the process of theoretical formulation, the investigator achieves both parsimony and scope in terms of the theory's application to various situations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 343).

During the stage of writing theory, the analyst is usually confident about the premises upon which the construction is formulated as well as its properties. The comments which apply to each category are collated and the unitised data used to validate, substantiate or illustrate any aspects of the theory. Glaser and Strauss refer to the theory which is grounded in the process of interpreting data outlined above, as "developmental" theory, i.e.

> theories of process, sequence and change pertaining to organisations, positions, and social interaction. But whether the theory itself is static or developmental, its generation, by this method and by theoretical sampling, is continually in process. In comparing incidents, the analyst learns to see his [sic] categories in terms of both their internal development and their changing relations to other categories (1967: 114).

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the methodological approach adopted for this investigation. The reasons for the suitability of the naturalistic paradigm have been sketched and an argument made for the utilisation of both the illuminative and the responsive evaluation approaches. In discussing the constructivist framework, the understanding of the existence of multiple realities as discussed in chapter two has been endorsed. It is also proposed that findings which emerge from the research are presented as the researcher's reconstruction of the investigation. The discussion of illuminative and responsive evaluation contextualises the debate about the subjectivity of the researcher in naturalistic inquiry. It is argued that there are various techniques such as triangulation and the reporting of the full spectrum of responses to questions posed in the investigation, which can be employed to overcome the problem of subjectivity - an inevitable feature of the type of research conducted. Tools used for the analysis and interpretation of data are discussed with the suggestion that theories which emerge from the investigation, will be grounded in the data gathered.

Chapter Five

An empirical study of the ILRIG and ERIP cases

The three sections of this chapter deal with the empirical component of this study and discuss the ILRIG and ERIP cases in depth. The sources of data in the empirical component are interviews, questionnaires, reports, minutes of meetings, and organisational archives which provided access to documentation recording the projects' progress. The purpose of this chapter is to document the case studies and in so doing to attempt to address issues posed at the very outset of this investigation. These issues which were discussed in chapter one are recapitulated in the first section of this chapter so as to recall the intention behind the case studies.

An initial section introduces both case studies and considers the investigation in relation to the cases jointly. The reason for providing a common introduction to the cases stems from the fact that both organisations were engaged with the researcher and at times with each other in a mutual process of clarifying and shaping the actual research. This section thus covers common ground, outlining the research process and issues generic to both projects. It paves the way for the subsequent sections which deal with the cases individually thus highlighting their uniqueness. Detailed accounts of first the ILRIG and then the ERIP cases are thus provided in subsequent sections.

The conduct of the investigation is outlined at the beginning of each of the three sections as well as throughout the chapter, providing insight into the way in which the research approach developed through the course of the

study - a feature of responsive evaluation as discussed in chapter four.

5.1 Section One: Introducing the ILRIG and ERIP cases

5.1.1 Introduction

This section introduces the ILRIG and ERIP cases. It deals with a substantial period of the evaluation process (roughly one and a half years) which involved clarifying and refining the purpose of the evaluation study through negotiation and consultation with the two projects, mostly jointly, and at times separately. This research stage laid the ground work for the subsequent separate investigation of each case.

The reasons for selecting the two cases are provided followed by an account of how the study's objectives were re-formulated through the process of interaction with the projects. Issues pertinent to the evaluation study which were addressed during this preliminary stage are outlined.

5.1.2 Selecting the cases

ILRIG and ERIP were selected as cases to investigate the issues of alternative information provision and the interface between information services and their users because (a) they were viewed as representative and typical of 'alternative' projects and (b) they are well-established and highly visible among their respective constituencies. It was thought that an evaluation of both organisations would lead to the investigation of common as well as unique features.

Both ERIP and ILRIG are Western Cape service organisations which emerged in the late 1970's and early 1980's respectively. ILRIG has an academic

orientation and an office at the University of Cape Town, yet has realised an increasingly popular role in serving the labour movement - its targeted user group. ERIP which is currently based at the University of the Western Cape, emerged historically alongside community and student organisations and continues to service primarily these sectors. Both the ILRIG and ERIP projects run resource centres, produce publications and provide educational workshops. Together these projects provide a service to a wide range of progressive organisations and while differing in their experiences and conditions of work, share the aims of addressing injustices and providing relevant information to their targeted user groups.

The reasons for selecting the cases were expressed in correspondence to the projects (cf Appendices 1a & b). Beyond the fact that both groups had legitimacy among their users, and that the organisations are committed to providing useful information to users in productive and accessible ways, the creative methods of which were of primary concern in this study, ILRIG was chosen for the following reasons:

re-location of the group's main office to Community House as part of a move to popularise its services and increase its accessibility to the labour movement specifically, signalled ILRIG's concern with improving the utilisation of its service;

the organisation's acceptability by and legitimacy within the democratic movement suggested that its methods in information provision might pertain to other centres as well;

the researcher had been in the organisation's employ for two years and thus was familiar with the project. It was hoped that this history

would improve access to founder members as well as current staff of the group.

The reasons for ERIP's selection are as follows:

its history of being repressed highlights the information inaccessibility and information control problems in SA;

its style of work, i.e. the educational workshop method alongside the resource aspect of the project, represents the dominant methods of work undertaken by most alternative information services so that although this would be a case study with the usual problems of generalisability, the project's experiences and problems might well pertain to other groups;

ERIP's primary user population is different from that of ILRIG's, an aspect which made the contrast of the study potentially useful in that the methods of work in reaching different audiences would be addressed through the study.

5.1.3 Focussing on issues through progress of the research

ILRIG and ERIP were approached at the outset of the study to moot an interest in researching aspects of their projects in order to examine issues of central concern to this investigation. In keeping with the concept of progressive focussing (cf. chapter four), these issues were refined through the initial negotiating stages of the research process in order to ensure that the investigations would be of maximum benefit to the projects.

The importance attached to the utilisation-focussed nature of responsive and

illuminative evaluation, as explained in chapter four, was the principle underlying the refinement of the study's concerns. To illustrate this point, it can be noted that ILRIG and ERIP were initially approached to study "the methods of work of information centres in meeting the information needs of their users" (Correspondence to ILRIG and ERIP, 17/3/90: 1). In the research proposal, following discussion, this aim was developed into the following broad areas of concern:

to reach an understanding of how alternative information services emerged in the South African context;

to investigate how alternative information services contributed to the realisation of a 'freer' flow of information;

to assess the methods of information provision employed by these organisations to provide services to their users (Research Proposal: 1990).

Through various deliberations with both projects, the study's focus progressively became more carefully defined. After a few meetings and interchanges, the broad aims were formulated as:

seeking an understanding of how alternative information services emerged in the South African context; and

how they contributed to the struggle for free access to information;

while the specific objectives at this point were summarised as:

arriving at an understanding of the methods of information provision the information services employ in providing a service to their users;

assessing the effectiveness of the ways in which the projects provide a service and have evaluated themselves. This objective raises the projects' relationships to users and concerns both the extent to which users inform the direction of the projects, and the extent to which projects internalise and act on findings of their evaluations (cf Appendix 2: Progress Report 14 November 1990: 1 - 3).

A shift in the focus of the research started emerging at this point as evidenced above in a growing concern with the complexity of the methods of information provision employed by the organisations. Discussions with the projects brought to light the problem that the provision of information could not be viewed only in terms of the work of information services or the resource centre wings of the projects. As noted in chapter two, information servicing is integrally linked to and cannot be viewed in isolation of the other services which NGOs provide. Thus when ILRIG delivers an education and/or research service, these carry built-in information components. The research focus thus consciously shifted from a study of the "information service component" of the projects - if indeed this could be discretely isolated - to a study of the range of services provided and the inter-relation between these and user needs. This shift is evidenced in the re-formulation of objectives towards the end of the eighteen-month period of joint interaction. They were agreed on as being to evaluate:

the appropriateness of the current service in relation to user needs;

the ways in which ILRIG and ERIP identify user needs and the extent to which they address these;

the structure, processes and procedures of the projects in carrying

out their work;

the methods of empowering users, i.e. education, resource and information provision;

the ways in which the projects evaluate themselves

(cf Appendix 3. Progress Report 24 September 1991: 2).

These objectives then, express an understanding of information work which is clearly not restricted to the operations of a resource centre. In the context of development, they are premised on a logical integration of information support with any kind of service delivery, including educational work. The notion of user need presupposes that, as explained in chapter two, all needs embody an information dimension. This suggests that in the context of NGOs, users require of these services information which can be delivered in a range of ways whether through publications, educational workshops or visual displays. It is for this reason that in the context of this study, it was preferred by the researcher and the projects that an examination of the information function which NGOs perform not be restricted to the investigation of only the information components or resource centres operative within such organisations. The research parties regarded it as more beneficial to consider information work which NGOs carry out by investigating the information components of the broader range of services which they offer their constituencies and in this way, trying to understand how they could change or transform their service so as to improve their information functions. It should be noted, however, that while the study chose to evaluate the information work of NGOs, it did not intend an overall organisational evaluation of the selected cases, but merely an investigation

of how they went about identifying, engaging with, and addressing user needs. In effect, the delimitation of the study confined the scope of the evaluation to render it manageable.

During discussion of these objectives and the September, 1991 Progress Report with ILRIG, the organisation queried the researcher's observation that a shift had occurred from "reactive anti-apartheid politics to proactive, developmental work" (cf Appendix 3. Progress Report 24 September 1991: 1). ILRIG argued that such a claim presupposed a change in user needs and expressed the wish to 'test' whether such a change had in fact occurred since requests received from organisations did not seem to endorse this view. This background led to greater focussing on the first two of the five objectives listed above, for the ILRIG study. While it was agreed that the latter three objectives would remain intact, it was decided that they would be de-emphasised, in relation to the others, but still form part of the case record. While recommendations would be made in relation to them, they would not be the primary focus of the research and would not be fully evaluated. As will be seen in reporting on the ILRIG case below, these three objectives constitute part of the case report, but it was the first two which were prioritised in the user surveys.

To understand why the investigation required evaluation studies, explanations from chapter four will briefly be recapitulated. Evaluations aim to judge the worth (extrinsic property) and merit (intrinsic property) of something (Stufflebeam & Shinkfield, 1985: 3-5). An organisation's worth relates to the extent of need for the service and its merit to the excellence of its service. This research aimed to judge the worth and merit of ILRIG and ERIP's services (current at the time of the investigation) in relation to user

needs; their methods of identifying user needs and the extent to which they addressed user needs. The two objectives identified as the basis for the focussed evaluation relate to the ways in which the organisations engage users. They also relate closely to the fourth listed objective, viz. the methods of empowering users. The latter remained a de-prioritised objective because the intention was not to evaluate methods themselves. Instead informants were asked to comment on the adequacy of these methods in empowering them, and for additional ways in which they thought organisations might address their needs.

Through interaction with the projects, the progressive focussing on themes which were devised as objectives (noted above) for consideration in the case studies, had significant value for the overall study. It meant that the organisations participated in shaping the evaluation brief allowing them the opportunity to design it in accordance with their needs. Through their negotiation of the evaluation brief, the projects were committing themselves to the research process and the study generally, although the ERIP account documented below brings this into question.

Notwithstanding the gains of enhancing the value of the study for the organisations, the latter 'benefit' raises questions of whether the researcher's interests became compromised through negotiation with the projects and whether 'collective ownership' of the study undermined the researcher's voice. Both questions refer to the power relation between the researcher and the projects. These issues were satisfactorily addressed at the time through consideration of the conduct and circumstances of the study, as will be seen in the following section.

There are further implicit questions of whether the study is individually or collectively designed and to what extent the researcher can take credit for the design. These questions articulate well with issues of knowledge construction (cf chapter two) and the learning process (cf chapter three) as discussed earlier in this study. Knowledge and meaning derive from and impact upon social contexts and thus cannot be isolated as belonging solely to an individual. Further, the mediation of ideas in the process of learning implies that when taking credit for the 'creation' of ideas, individuals need to acknowledge the various hidden influences which inform those ideas. However, individuals can also acknowledge the input they make in the generation of ideas, knowledge and systems. In the context of this study, the role of the collective/s in shaping the study must be acknowledged not only in relation to the way in which this influenced the study but also in terms of adding value to the study. Similarly, the role of the researcher in coordinating and facilitating the research, spear-heading the initiative, and contributing intellectually to the conception, design and direction of the study must be recognised. It should be noted that inasmuch as negotiations with the projects were sought and considered beneficial, the general framework and incentive for the research as well as the formulation of the research proposal rested with the researcher. Thus while specific objectives were refined during the initial stage of the research process as explained above, the overall purpose of the research as described in chapter one and as designed by the researcher, remained intact. In other words, democratisation of the research process which entailed the inclusion of ERIP and ILRIG in the process, did not undermine the primary role of the researcher in directing and interpreting the study for the purposes of the intended dissertation.

5.1.4 Designing and refining the evaluation brief

Interaction with the projects was identified as the primary basis on which the study would be conducted. This approach was viewed as crucial to the evaluation process not only for reasons of beneficiating or enhancing the value of the study (as discussed above) but also because of the emphasis which both the projects and the researcher placed on collective decision making, inclusivity and democracy (Stake, 1985). The importance of some of these values to service organisations was discussed in chapter three. It is worthwhile noting that these values partly informed the research approach: it seemed logical to opt for responsive evaluation by illumination as this resonated with the way in which the projects largely operated. The interactive approach was thus familiar to the organisations and easy to implement, rendering the initial stage of the research process both procedurally comfortable and productive. Instrumentation used in support of this code or style were meetings of various kinds and written communications including progress reports and letters.

In accordance with the interactive mode, the projects were initially approached to win their consent for the study (cf. Appendix 1). Once they had agreed to play this role, the terms of the research as well as the evaluation brief were negotiated with them so that their collaboration could be gained for the study. A common vision for the study was thus built through a series of meetings which at times included both organisations. These meetings were usually based on documentation submitted to the projects by the researcher. Agendas which could be amended were proposed by the researcher. In addition, progress reports were used as a mechanism through which (a)interaction with the projects was maintained;

and (b)they could be updated on research developments.

5.1.5 Terms of interaction between the researcher and projects

During the initial stage, issues of accountability and cooperation; the scope of the case studies; circumstances of the case; conduct of the study; and consequences of the research were raised with the projects. These are dealt with in turn below.

The issue of accountability was raised by the researcher early on in the process in an attempt to ensure that both the inquirer and the projects evaluated would benefit from the study (cf Appendix 4. 13 July 1990: 2). At a joint meeting with the two organisations, specific items relating to constructive use of the projects' time; accurate representation of views and records of the project; and access to documentation were raised. There was general agreement that whatever was found through research should be included in the thesis. However, it was felt that sensitive findings should be verified and written reports scanned by the projects before inclusion in the thesis so that they could both check that their comments were accurately presented, and avoid the inclusion of confidential information. This understanding precluded licence by the organisations to exclude negative judgements or criticism of their work. It was further agreed that documentation should be made available by the projects to the researcher without hesitation. An important issue clarified was that projects and the researcher could differ with each other, but that the former should be given the opportunity to write up their differing views in the form of annexures to the thesis. It was intended that this device would ensure that the organisations being investigated were granted the opportunity to respond to

the research findings. As can be seen from Appendix 8, both ILRIG and ERIP responded favourably to the researcher's presentation of the investigation and expressed their satisfaction that the study proved valuable to their organisations.

Some of these issues were recorded in correspondence to the projects in a progress report section entitled "Circumstances of the case" (cf Appendix 3. Progress Report 24 September 1991: 5 - 6). The intention in documenting these issues was to provide a record of them for the purposes of clarifying the terms of the relationship between researcher and organisations.

In the next section of the same report entitled "Conduct of the study", further issues were documented. It was made clear that the methods and techniques used in the study would be discussed with the projects; that information which is potentially inaccurate or unreliable would be validated before inclusion in the final write-up; and that in the words of Simon, the "overheard should be distinguished from hearsay, primary evidence from secondary, description from interpretation, verbatim accounts from summaries" (1980: 55). These directives were implemented, as will be seen in the discussion of the cases individually, by including projects in discussions of the evaluation approach and instrumentation to be used in progress reports and meetings; using triangulation to validate data, etc.

Reporting through written documents, meetings and discussions was identified as central to the study and seen as the prime means through which the study would be checked for relevance and made useful to the organisations. The primary tools used in each case study, once the investigation had diverged, were interview guides, progress reports and

discussion meetings (cf Appendices).

In a further section entitled "Consequences of the research", the intended purpose of the study to be useful and not in any way destructive, was stated. The hope that the study could improve the projects' roles in servicing their users and motivating for the importance of their work to funders, was also declared.

The proposed research approach was also discussed at the outset so that there could be agreement on research methodology and cooperation in the design of an evaluation programme.

It was at this point in the overall study that work proceeded with the projects more-or-less independently. The following two sections which discuss the ILRIG and ERIP cases respectively, both assume this introduction as the common starting point from whence their specific investigations proceeded.

5.2 Section Two: The ILRIG case

5.2.1 Introduction

The ILRIG investigation took as its objectives those commonly derived in consultation with both projects (cf 5.1.3 above). Its concern in summary, therefore, was to develop an understanding of how well the organisation functioned in relation to its users in providing its services.

For purposes of presenting the evidence gathered in this case study, this section deals firstly with the research process. The project's orientation and history is then briefly discussed so as to induct the reader. This is followed

by a discussion of ILRIG's organisational brief, goals and strategies which includes consideration of its targeted users, its interaction with organisations and its methods of service delivery. Some organisational features which facilitate the work of the project, viz. coordination, proactivity, accountability, structures and services, staff training, collectivism, and evaluation are discussed in this sub-section to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how the organisation functions. The selection of users and non-users for the surveys is then considered as well as the instrumentation used during this stage of the research. Finally, outcomes of the user and potential user surveys as well as the process through which this was fed back into ILRIG are discussed. The dialogue which the surveys generated between the project and the organisations are noted by way of closure to this section.

5.2.2 The research process

The first steps in the ILRIG process entailed three initial interviews with the then co-ordinator of the project to determine (a)the workings of the group at that point; and (b)the best way of proceeding with a study of the group's internal operations and external dealings. Close collaboration with the co-ordinator over and above that with the group as a whole, facilitated contact over this period. The coordinator would report to the group and in that way provide a channel between the researcher and the ILRIG collective. These discussions which orientated the researcher to the project, led to a series of interviews with the other members of the project. Following interviews with the full staffing complement, the project co-ordinator and researcher together identified ways of taking forward the investigation. The idea of conducting both a user and non-user survey to determine ways in which the

project could improve its service was agreed upon. This involved establishing the kinds of questions to be put to respondents and determining who those respondents would be.

In parallel with the research study, ILRIG continued to conduct its internal quarterly evaluations (cf 5.2.3.7 below). This was done since ILRIG felt that the need to evaluate their work had developed organically and there was a lack of clarity about how strong the connection between its evaluation and the research would be. Completion of the internal interviews coincided with the project's 1991 year-end evaluation and, as noted below, was used quite extensively by the group in considering their role and structure in these meetings. There is no doubt that the research study and the project's own evaluation in some respects dove-tailed and impacted upon one another. It was agreed by the organisation that it was an oversight not to have linked the processes of the research and the internal evaluation more consciously and closely. Despite this error of omission, it was evident that the parallel and at times merging research and internal assessment processes generated a context of evaluation which facilitated discussion of the study and its findings.

5.2.3 History and orientation

ILRIG was formed in 1983 in the Sociology Department at the University of Cape Town. At the time of ILRIG's inception, little work had been done on bringing international labour studies to the South African labour movement in a form and manner appropriate for consumption by workers. As noted earlier, during the early 1980's, there was growing concern within progressive circles with notions of "popular" and "people's education"

(Kruss, 1988). These concepts sought to understand ways in which educational content and methodology were being used by and could be used by the democratic movement to promote community empowerment. Within this context, a number of service or non-governmental organisations defined their work in support of the democratic movement. The Labour History Group, for instance, sought to popularise South African worker experience, so that the labour movement could build and reflect on its experience. The work of this grouping provided some incentive for the ILRIG project which aimed to fill the vacuum of international labour studies.

ILRIG's initial purpose was to do research into international labour and to provide the South African trade union movement with such information. In this way, ILRIG as a service organisation hoped to promote international solidarity between workers from South Africa and those from other countries. Initially, the organisation's work took the predominant form of the publication of a series of books on the history of labour movements in other countries. The first series of ILRIG books dealt with Chile, Botswana, Brazil and Bolivia. Over the years, ILRIG's methods of reaching its targeted audience expanded to include other forms of delivery such as educational workshops and the establishment of a resource centre.

5.2.4 Organisational brief, goals and strategies

The sources for this sub-section are primarily organisational documentation and interview findings from the discussions held with ILRIG's staff. At the time of conducting the interviews, the project's subject focus spanned international labour, politics and economics, and it performed an educational role. Its intention was to assist in the building of mass organisations and to

contribute towards the creation of membership control and democracy within mainly worker and youth organisations. Through working with organisations, ILRIG wanted to consciously reach and make an impact upon individual members in the belief that these learners would feed knowledge and experience back into their organisations. In this regard the project's intentions corresponded to Freire's postulation that individual conscientisation is essential for group agency (cf chapter three).

With respect to content, the project sought to generate activity and a consciousness around international solidarity and saw its work deepening the struggle for socialism. In its educational work, ILRIG was interested in how learners apply knowledge in their environments on a daily basis.

In attempting to define ILRIG's role and brief, one of its staff members recalled that there was always a problem of defining the organisation's subject focus: whether it was popularising international experiences or working educationally to assist users develop concepts. She remarked that with increasing emphasis on education, the international specificity of the group became blurred and this identity became lost. It seems then that the apparent complement between the project's subject focus (predominantly international labour) and its means of imparting this (educational workshops) was sometimes unbalanced. In other words, the organisation became more concerned with the educational method of delivering information, i.e. with the medium of information delivery rather than with the need to deliver international labour experiences. ILRIG came to deviate from its international labour focus in order to deliver information to workers on contemporary and topical issues. In using the workshop as a means through which to impart this information, the organisation came to concentrate on methodology and

enskilling workers and while still imparting labour information, it no longer concentrated on international labour. The emphasis of the organisation appeared to be on bringing concepts and skills to participants, rather than a specific subject focus.

The tension around subject content versus enskilling and teaching learners about conceptualisation, exemplifies Freire's content versus methodology argument raised in chapter three by emphasising that irrespective of content, participants could gain skills through educational workshops. However, the ILRIG experience acknowledges, as noted below, that participants learn best through their own knowledge and identity and hence their ability to identify with what is being 'taught' or presented, i.e. the subject content of workshops. Thus in terms of its educational function, ILRIG recognises the connection between the content of its programmes and its methodology in facilitating the building of mass organisations. One of the staff members argued that it has to relate content directly to the experiences of participants in order to impact upon workers since people learn in terms of their sources of knowledge and experiences. This emphasised the need to utilise the subject focus of material in order to impart conceptual skills to learners. Implicit in these remarks is ILRIG's increasing emphasis on South African topics and experiences in educational workshops. This departure from an international labour focus, it is suggested, has occurred in accordance with expressed needs and requests put to the project. However, matters are not necessarily as clear cut as this. With regard to the problem of 'facilitator bias' as discussed in chapter three, ILRIG, in the act of facilitating educational processes and mediating learning, themselves have the ability to direct the educational process and are at

liberty to determine outcomes (cf chapter three). In other words, the organisation is in a position not only to respond to user requests but also to determine the content of the courses it delivers. This issue is revisited below in a discussion of content and style of the project's educational programmes.

Over time, it appears that greater consensus was built within the group as to its role, viz:

to provide education to empower workers to better understand society around them and change it. In doing this, ILRIG draws on international experiences of workers to inform their work;

to address the needs of South African workers, recognising that these are closely linked with those of workers elsewhere.

Arising from the research and its corresponding internal evaluation, ILRIG rebuilt its "capacity to provide a specialised service on international labour and political issues" (ILRIG Annual Project Report, 1994: 5). Part of ILRIG's role then would be to build international worker solidarity by showing workers that their struggles are similar to those of workers globally.

5.2.4.1 Coordination of the project

With regard to the overall functioning of the organisation, one of the interviewees noted that ILRIG needed a full-time manager-cum-coordinator who could systematically assess and address the group's problems and progress. Organisational coordinators generally became bogged down with too much service work to coordinate the project effectively. This was borne out during a period of joint coordination, in which both co-ordinators were

over-extended on account of their workloads, limiting their ability to perform effectively at the level of overseeing the project. ILRIG had not opted for a manager (a)for financial reasons; and (b)because of the group's commitment to a collective - it was felt that a managerial portfolio would conflict with this style. However, it was noted during the interviews that there does not necessarily have to be a contradiction between employing a manager and building participative democracy. It was felt that a full-time co-ordinator could:

coordinate ILRIG's productivity aspect, ensuring that plans are carried out and noting when this is not happening;

monitor the running of the project and the internal workings of the group;

strategise around the project's direction;

coordinate internal training;

handle PRO work often connected to funding and overseas visitors;

facilitate communication between individuals and the group;

reflect problems and projections back to the group.

5.2.4.2 Reactive versus proactive capacity

At the time of investigation, with its focus on worker and youth organisations, ILRIG was still operating by and large on the basis of responding to requests rather than actively offering particular packages and 'courses'. Educational programmes were organised and designed specifically

in response to requests. Advertisement of ILRIG's services which occurred mainly through workshops, mail, individuals visiting the centre and meetings, would result in requests. Beyond this, ILRIG would offer particular workshops to organisations with whom the project had an established relationship. In these situations, ILRIG's contact persons would consult with these organisations about which programmes would benefit them. Similarly, organisations might approach ILRIG about programmes when doing their education planning.

Among staff members, there was a view that trade unions were making their education plans in advance and in accordance with this, making requests of NGOs for longer-term programmes. It was felt that these trends among users to project their future plans improved ILRIG's chances of becoming more proactive since it could design programmes in accordance with greater user vision, longer-term plans and trends. An over-riding difficulty would remain the fluid terrain and unpredictable nature of trade unionism, e.g. a strike could derail clearly laid out plans. Nonetheless the organisation at this point was developing more material proactively, but acknowledged the need to make this material more accessible. This problem of 'marketing' the project is re-visited below. What becomes apparent through this argument is that proactive information provision, where such a service is delivered through educational programmes, would have to be highly adaptable to rapidly changing circumstances.

A tension was identified between proactive and reactive work since ILRIG often serviced needs best through responsive work, i.e. responding to and designing workshops to meet specific requests. The organisation felt that it was more important to respond to requests rather than offer planned

programmes because expressed requests, based on needs and problems, were viewed by users as important and in need of being serviced. This argument did not take account of the fact that unexpressed needs are often equally as significant as expressed ones and that service organisations could assist users in identifying unarticulated needs. Also, proactivity in the sense of anticipating and addressing education needs cannot be contrasted with responding to requests in that proactive work could also address expressed needs and might additionally bring some unexpressed ones to the fore. The problem which seemed to be surfacing was not that proactivity would lead to the exclusion of responding to requests but that time management was a difficulty and that in ILRIG's experience, it seemed unproductive to perform both functions simultaneously.

5.2.4.3 Accountability to users

ILRIG is of the ilk of service organisations which prioritises democracy both as a goal and a practice, as discussed in chapter two. Accountability in its relationships with users was largely structurally interpreted in that ILRIG would try to work through worker committees or representatives in designing programmes. ILRIG would follow procedures in its dealings with organisations with the intention of empowering the union to direct its work. For example, in the process of participating in the design of workshops, organisational members would develop skills which would be of benefit to their organisation. One of ILRIG's concerns was that of the relationship between the committee with whom the project would have contact, and the rest of that organisation's members. The project felt that the channels of communication between union structures and rank-and-file members might in practice not be as direct as they are in theory. This issue is discussed

below.

Wherever the opportunity arose such as through Workers College[1] programmes, ILRIG would encourage workers to think about education work in their unions in order to become more conscious about education and to stimulate processes and/or establish structures to facilitate this work. The project would also, in the absence of structures, use the workshop opportunity to facilitate the creation of such structures. Thus the organisation was concerned not only with its short-term dealings with unions and other groupings, but also with the nature of these relationships in the long-term. Its direct interest was in empowering these groups to function more self-sufficiently through strengthening their structures. The structures created the opportunity for more formalised interaction between the union and other organisations. However, ILRIG's intimate involvement with unions at this level potentially also created a dependency not unlike that of learners on facilitators as discussed in chapter three. The implications for information provision are similar: these organisations could develop dependencies on the project rendering them less independent than was intended. This issue relates to that regarding the intellectual power of service organisations to dominate their constituencies as discussed in chapter three. However, in this chapter the matter is not explored by the researcher much beyond the discussion of ILRIG's role in strike support work as outlined below.

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1 The Workers College is an institution which has invited ILRIG to deliver educational programmes. Its coordinator was interviewed in the user survey and the College's views have thus been incorporated into the evaluation study.

5.2.4.4 Organisational structures and services

Organisationally, ILRIG was divided into a number of structures to correspond to its various areas of work. In a process of restructuring, its organisational structure of discrete sub-committees (distribution, education, resources, and publications) was dissolved due to a lack of cohesion between the different sub-structures. These different units were insufficiently inter-connected, with the education sub-committee assuming greater prominence and the other units becoming excluded from decision-making and providing direction for the organisation. The requirements of many levels of democracy in attempts to achieve greater coherence between the sub-structures became very time-consuming detracting from time productively spent on providing a service to users. However, it was precisely the element of integration between the services - as opposed to the structures coordinating these - which constituted a strength in the organisation. In other words, different types of services such as research, writing and educational work were all enriched by feeding into one another. Thus despite the structural difficulty which the fragmented sub-structures created for democracy, the delivery of different services was enriching for the organisation as a whole.

The organisational strength generated by the integration of services resulted in a further tension: that between the integration of the project, and 'efficiency'. Often when a request was very effectively serviced drawing on all ILRIG's units, it was not always done efficiently or quickly. This refers mainly to cost in the sense that a request which was thoroughly and effectively addressed usually took more time than was available for its completion, as opposed to a task which was not very thoroughly completed

but was fitted into the available time allocated for it.

In terms of the information access and skills which the project provided its users, the following sub-committees performed the listed functions:

1) The education and training sub-committee provided:

a) Training in media, research and workshop skills. A mixture of requested and standardised courses were offered but these were constantly developed and adapted to users' particular conditions.

b) Education programmes which were either one-day workshops or longer-term programmes such as those run at the Workers College. These would have a labour and politics focus and could be either international or South African specific.

c) Strike support work would combine the education and training programmes.

2) The publications sub-committee produced:

a) Workers World;

b) information and workshop packs;

c) posters;

d) calendars;

e) books.

3) The information and resources sub-committee provided:

a) access to the centre;

b) information packs and an audio-visual library;

c) printouts of selective catalogues;

d) advice on setting up resource centres.

It is evident that all of the above contain an information component. This reinforces the earlier argument that the delivery of information occurs through a range of services offered by projects such as ILRIG (cf 5.1.2). In terms of the scope of services provided, some consideration of Workers World is instructive both because of the way in which its production brings together almost the entire spectrum of ILRIG's services, and because of its relevance in the surveys discussed below.

Workers World, a quarterly journal, was started by ILRIG in an attempt to bring information regarding labour histories and struggles of workers internationally (including South Africa) to other workers. The idea behind the publication was to use ILRIG's access to international labour information and to re-package news in ways that would reach the targeted readership who were mainly workers. The production of the journal involved research into the articles which were written with an attempt to use this work in additional ways, e.g. in educational workshops. The distribution of the quarterly was seen as a way of ILRIG gaining access to organised workers to hear their comments on what kinds of news they wanted the journal to carry. There was thus an endeavour to uncover user needs and to address these through making available appropriate information in an accessible form through an efficient interactive distribution network.

Workers World thus encapsulates the intentions of ILRIG's service: to make information on international labour struggles available to South African workers in ways that would deepen their struggles for change.

5.3.4.5 Staff training

ILRIG in its emphasis on organisational democracy, empowerment and collectivism, committed itself, at least in theory, to the educational development of its staff. At the time of interviews, there was a staff complement of eight persons. While ILRIG did not have a written 'affirmative action' policy, the group was committed to training and enskilling its employees. At the time of research, an unevenness in the level of skills and experiences of employees was recognised and there was an attempt to find a balance between efficiency in output and internal training and skilling of staff. In other words, there was a tension between the reproduction and circulation of skills intra-organisationally on the one hand, and efficient service provision to clients on the other. However, a problem arose with training people on-the-job in that this proved too time-consuming and the organisation preferred to opt for personnel being trained outside of the organisation. Nonetheless, hidden training continued to happen through the project carrying out its work and delegation of responsibilities became a means of developing the organisation's human resources.

The problem of staff empowerment was related to that of insufficient and unstructured induction of new persons into the group. While new people would be warmly welcomed, they would generally not follow a structured programme enabling them to spend time with each staff member, to become familiar with the work he or she performed and acquainted with the systems

used to support this work. Mentoring relationships were being considered as one way of overcoming this problem so that internal channels of communication would be opened to new employees from the start of their work in ILRIG. It was felt that this form of structured induction would allow staff to situate their on-the-job training in the context of ILRIG's entire operations.

In an effort to enhance job satisfaction, staff developed their own job descriptions which sometimes changed in accordance with people's skills rather than simply the tasks which needed to be performed. These descriptions fed into the development of a procedures manual which assisted with the induction of new staff into the project and clarified matters such as conditions of employment, administration, distribution and other ILRIG systems.

5.2.4.6 Building the collective

It is obvious from the above that ILRIG placed a great deal of emphasis on working collectively and ensuring that their employees developed through their jobs. Team work was considered the best way of developing the group as a collective. With the employment of relatively unskilled persons, ILRIG placed increasing emphasis on team work so that employees could gain confidence to do their work. The project realised that being a collective did not mean that everyone had to do everything. There was growing recognition that the organisation required a range of jobs and portfolios in order to function and, instead of emphasising the discomfort which a mental/manual division of labour presented in the group, the project came to value the complement which different jobs had within the organisation.

While the spirit of collectivism was strong, an interviewee suggested that the camaraderie created through the collective did not always allow for staff to be disciplined and suggested that the unit should have training in constructive criticism and self-criticism to facilitate this. This meant that the notion of building a collective could at times be superficial and self-defeating, suggesting that the foundation of the collective has to be in place in order for it to realise its potential. A collective could not merely aim to involve everyone in decision-making for the sake of participative democracy, but has to ensure a sense of accountability within a group and an assurance that the collective was improving the quality of a group's service. A suggestion made in relation to ILRIG was that there should be greater awareness of different staff members' strengths and weaknesses so that individual capacity and that of the group as a whole was clearly understood by all. This would provide a better understanding of what the group was capable of producing and delivering to its users: plans would be made in accordance with capacity.

5.2.4.7 Internal evaluations

ILRIG came to realise the importance of organisational evaluations soon after its inception. At the time of interviews, ILRIG was carrying out quarterly evaluation sessions which it would link to planning, although the latter would occur on a more regular basis. With regard to planning, there was a problem of reconciling more effective planning with the nature of the work: ILRIG was unable to quantify its services but had to take conscious decisions about why it regarded certain contracts as more important than others.

Regular strategising meetings were being held at the end of each month with the fourth of these culminating in an evaluation. At the end of year evaluation, an outside speaker would sketch a broad political context and the role of service organisations within it. The role of ILRIG would then be addressed within this framework. The project saw value in evaluation not only because of the opportunity this created for adopting broader perspectives of its work but also because of the confidence staff derived from such processes. However, this effort revolved around ILRIG evaluating itself. The project had not been systematic about gaining feedback from users. It was precisely in this regard that the research intended filling a gap in the organisation's evaluation approach. This was effected through the conduct of user surveys and the creation of a platform for ILRIG and its users to take forward their interactions generated through the research.

5.2.5 The process of producing the interview findings

The information gathered in the staff interviews was taken back to ILRIG and, as noted earlier, fed into their 1991 year-end evaluation. The project felt that the presence of the researcher at this meeting might inhibit the flow of discussion and chose to proceed with the organisation's internal evaluation independently of the researcher.

The next stage of the study entailed a series of consultations with ILRIG to determine precisely what should be sought in interviewing members from among the project's targeted audience. This process involved identifying (a)the need to interview both users and non-users of ILRIG's service; (b)who the interviewees would be; and (c)what questions to pose to them.

It was agreed that in order to reach an understanding of how ILRIG was

perceived by its constituency, it would be instructive to interview different types of users ranging from organisations which use the project quite extensively to those who do not use the service at all. A further categorisation of interviewees was found in choosing different types of organisations, e.g. student, youth and worker groups. On the basis of this approach, ILRIG provided the researcher with a list of 15 organisations selected primarily in accordance with the principle of the extent of use of the project. Classification of the users into organisational types proved less significant since the project dealt mainly with worker organisations.

The specified users were divided into categories in an attempt to identify standardised questions which could be posed to each group. These were:

A those who use ILRIG regularly;

B those who do not use ILRIG at all;

C a special case which used ILRIG differently over the years;

D a special case with whom ILRIG was busy establishing a working relationship.

It was agreed that the first of these categories would provide the primary pool of information, that the third category would be added to this, and that category D would be considered at the same time as the second group of interviews. This meant that category D would receive the same questions as those in group B. In the case of C i.e. the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) interviews, some questions were posed in addition to those for the group A respondents. The reason for putting additional questions to COSATU had to do with the special nature of their case, viz.

the fact that they were the largest labour federation in the country and hence, a unique ILRIG user.

It was agreed by ILRIG and the researcher that the purpose of these interviews was to gauge from users their:

impressions of ILRIG;

needs to which ILRIG could respond;

ideas concerning the appropriateness of ILRIG's service in relation to their needs;

working relationship with ILRIG (where applicable);

recommendations concerning ILRIG's future role.

The process of refining the interview questions involved the researcher's proposals being commented on by ILRIG. The project was specifically asked what they needed to know from users. This was viewed as important so that the project fully supported the general thrust of the user and potential user surveys, and were accepting of the outcomes of the research. Through this interaction and negotiation of the purpose of the surveys, the latter's credibility, legitimacy and use-value were improved.

The process of refinement yielded two interview guides. These were given to interviewees along with a letter from the researcher requesting the interview, and one from the project supporting the request. The arrangement made with interviewees and ILRIG was that respondents would be given access to their transcripts prior to ILRIG so that they could validate and verify these. The intention was that participants should feel satisfied

with the accuracy of their transcripts since ILRIG would eventually have access to these.

Group A interviews were conducted first and ILRIG provided with an interim report (cf Appendix 5 Interim Report 1). The report was assimilated by the researcher on the basis of the interview findings and included a section on the researcher's observations made about the issues discussed with interviewees. The anonymity of interviewees was built into this report since transcripts had not yet been ratified. This was done to ensure that relations between interviewees and ILRIG were built on a basis agreeable to both parties. The report was embargoed as ILRIG property until the group had discussed its contents. It was thus viewed as a basis on which they could start addressing issues raised in the interviews. Once the transcripts had been authenticated by interviewees, these were passed on to the project who then, having had preliminary discussions based on Interim Report 1, processed the information with a different 'eye'. Triangulation was used in this study to ensure that the data gathered from interviews provided an accurate basis on which to premise reports of the findings. The researcher compiled the interview findings and the reports on the basis of these findings. Interviewees were asked to check their transcripts for accuracy and these were then submitted to readers of the reports so that they too could assess the researcher's reliability and accuracy in interpreting findings. It became evident, as discussed below, that the researcher and the project at times placed emphasis on different issues raised in the transcripts.

The next report, i.e. Interim Report 2 (cf Appendix 6) was compiled on the basis of a number of inputs, viz:

- the discussions between the researcher and ILRIG of Interim Report 1; and

- the assimilation of the findings of the Group C interviews.

On the basis of both reports and the transcripts, ILRIG identified issues which they wished to discuss with the respondent organisations. Group B and D transcripts were then fed to the organisation and discussed.

Extensive discussion of the transcripts, the reports and the survey findings resulted in consideration of how the research process would be taken forward. It was agreed that ILRIG and its constituents should conduct an independent relationship that did not rely upon the continued input of an 'outsider', in this case, the researcher. This stage of the research process thus set in motion an interaction between ILRIG and group participants which, as intended, moved beyond the confines of the research. The study thus had a positive impact on the project in that recommendations became integrated into the organisation's operations.

5.2.6 A discussion of issues emerging from the user surveys

The user surveys comprised individual as opposed to group interviews. The interviews seldom followed the initially designed course rigidly, but were certainly guided by the questions provided. In other words the interview guides steered the discussions but the interviews were open-ended, although respondents hardly deviated from the schedule provided. Participants were very responsive suggesting that the interviews prompted them to think more rigorously about ILRIG, their organisations and the relations between the two. They registered an interest in pursuing

discussions raised through the research beyond the confines of the study. In this regard their views were consistent with the intentions of the researcher and the project.

Interim Report 1 summarises the researcher's interpretations of the Group A interviews. The report was based on the findings of 6 of the 8 intended user interviews - the 2 remaining interviews did not occur due to time constraints. The report introduced the findings (noting the issue of interviewer bias), sketched the context of user comments, identified responses under selected headings, recorded observations made by the researcher, and suggested ways in which the report could be used.

The main issues about which respondents spoke were identified by the researcher as:

a) ILRIG's focus and audience;

b) user education needs;

c) ILRIG's approach to education and empowerment;

d) proactivity and identifying user needs;

e) accountability;

f) ILRIG's future role.

At times links can be drawn between these and the issues raised during the internal ILRIG interviews. The importance of these issues is that they started to highlight ways in which the project's provision of services either suited users or could be improved upon. All of the issues, including that regarding

accountability, relate to the information component of ILRIG's work in that they identify what kinds of information users want and need, and speak about how best this information can be mediated to groups with regards to both structures and methods.

The second report built on a re-worked listing of issues which arose through discussion of Interim Report 1 by the researcher and the project. Interim Report 2, therefore, identified reformulated issues, viz:

international news dissemination;

forming an ILRIG user group;

rationalisation of service;

books and Workers' World;

the form of education;

the content of ILRIG's services;

the style of service provision;

'nationalisation' of ILRIG.

After discussion of Interim Report 2 and the transcripts themselves, eleven issues were collectively identified by ILRIG and the researcher. These were taken by ILRIG to a meeting of interviewees, the project and the researcher, to discuss research findings and the way forward. In preparation for this meeting, a document which detailed the research process from the perspectives of both the researcher and the project, and which reported on the interview findings, was circulated to stake-holders.

The eleven issues which provide insight into ILRIG's perspective regarding the research findings are as follows:

following up the research ... more regular consultation;

accountability of service work in working directly with union members;

the content focus of ILRIG's work

the forms of ILRIG's service;

Workers World

education methodology;

proactivity and publicity of ILRIG's service;

geographical scope and ILRIG's regional or national profile;

payment for services;

composition and turnover of ILRIG staff; and

professionalism.

In addition to this classification of issues, in the 'follow-up' process, ILRIG reported discussions to users in a package of material which included a document detailing ILRIG's responses to user comments contained in the surveys. ILRIG identified six themes according to which it had categorised users' comments and its responses. These were:

the role of ILRIG and the content of its work;

the forms of ILRIG's service;

how ILRIG carries out its work and how it relates to workers' organisations;

geographical scope;

professionalism;

composition and turnover of ILRIG staff and drawing outsiders into ILRIG's work.

These are listed to provide the reader with a complete picture of the various interpretations and reports made of the research findings. In order to communicate actual findings, brief comment is made in the following section according to categorisation derived by considering the various listings of items in reports, so as to provide the reader with a sense of the concrete outcomes of the investigation. In a subsequent section, the researcher's reflections on what the ensuing interactions between ILRIG and users around the research findings implies for the objectives posed by the research, are considered. This interpretation does not constitute so much a testing of hypotheses as an exploration of issues at an abstract level or a consideration of the study's objectives on the basis of the research conducted. In other words, the issues and insights that lie behind what the findings reveal are investigated.

5.2.7 An interpretation of user survey findings

The intention in the following sub-section is not simply to report interview findings as presented in the Interim Reports which are appended. Instead,

the idea is to identify the gist of respondents' arguments in relation to the objectives of the overall study. In considering the various objectives such as the appropriateness of ILRIG's service in relation to user needs, sub-themes emerge which deepen understandings of users' perspectives on these issues. Some sub-themes which may emerge in the reports e.g. that regarding the geographical scope of ILRIG, are not dealt with in any detail below since they detract somewhat from the primary issues of this study.

Findings are thus reported according to the following headings:

the role of ILRIG and the content of its work, including:
  - ILRIG's international focus; and
  - its targeted users.

the forms of ILRIG's service, including:
  - books and Workers World;
  - educational workshops;
  - strike support work;

ILRIG's interface with its users, including:
  - the issue of accountability to users;
  - forming an ILRIG user group;
  - how ILRIG carries out its work;
  - composition and turnover of ILRIG staff and drawing outsider into the agency;
  - proactivity and publicity of ILRIG's service.

These issues are discussed in turn to start drawing links between ILRIG's intentions on the one hand and user perceptions of what the organisation

did and how it functioned on the other. The source of these data are:

the reports which are based on the interview transcripts;

ILRIG's package of documents which it circulated to users, including:

1) A summary of transcripts from interviews; and

2) Responses of ILRIG to interviews.

This sub-section refers to difficulties which ILRIG, and possibly service organisations generally, face in their relation to users and the operationalisation of their role. Some of these issues, as will be seen below, refer back to tensions within service organisations as discussed earlier in this study. It should be borne in mind at this point that the following accounts are those enlisted by the researcher.

5.2.7.1 The role of ILRIG and the content of its work

Practically all respondents argued for ILRIG's retention of or return to its international labour focus. Respondents motivated for this by saying that it is through rebuilding and capturing their 'internationalist niche', that the organisation was able to promote global perspectives among workers, build international worker solidarity, break down what one interviewee called a "South African worker chauvinism", and deepen South African workers' understanding of their own conditions and struggle by way of comparative analyses.

It was felt that ILRIG had lost what ought to have been its primary focus because it had expanded its brief in accordance with user requests and demands for practical rather than conceptual skills. For instance, the organisation had come to place a great deal of emphasis and hence was

expending much time on media training. ILRIG argued that it used this opportunity, i.e. the training of workers in media skills, to bring international lessons and experiences to users. Respondents on the other hand argued that this was not happening. In other words, users drew a distinction between 'hard' or practical skills and the ideological content of training sessions, at least insofar as ILRIG's media training was concerned. This begs the question: what of the integration between education and training as discussed in chapter three? There is surely a link between the content of training courses and the skills imparted in these courses? Unfortunately, the interviews did not fully address this issue as it was not covered in the interview schedule.

With respect to the issue of focus, respondents were of the opinion that ILRIG should concentrate its efforts on developing its service to meet the education and information needs of its users where these pertained to international labour issues. Central to these arguments was that ILRIG should target unions as its primary users. It was felt that 'narrowing down' of the targeted user group would serve both ILRIG and the constituency in that it would (a)allow the organisation access to the primary audience among whom international worker solidarity should be built, and (b)allow the targeted constituency mediated access to the international information they required to develop more of a global perspective on labour struggles.

Users made practical suggestions about the kinds of international information around which ILRIG could provide a service. Among these were the observations that the organisation's international work is 'satisfactory' on a general level, but that they require greater specialisation and focus and could offer inputs on or services around, for instance:

broad international political and economic trends;

developments in production processes;

international experiences of worker education;

developments in the international trade union movement;

international networking for trade unions;

international experiences of struggles against privatisation and retrenchments;

comparative experiences of struggles for centralised bargaining.

At the same time as arguing for ILRIG's international labour focus, respondents felt that ILRIG should include South African struggles in their brief. This would allow the organisation to undertake comparative analyses in ways that utilised struggles globally to highlight issues in struggles locally.

A further motivation for ILRIG returning to its international focus was the argument that no other grouping offered such a service from a labour perspective, in addition to which the largest labour federation - COSATU - did not have a strong international department.

While calling for an international labour focus, one of the respondents pointed to the need for ILRIG to impart to its users its research and communication skills. This underlined the difficulty for the organisation of whether to build capacity through empowering workers with conceptual and analytical skills, or whether to impart hard and practical skills such as media

skills. The proposition that the organisation continue to furnish both levels of skills to users is precisely what resulted in its generalised nature and its inability to deliver a focussed service.

A suggestion was made that ILRIG along with other NGOs collectively rationalise services provided to mass organisations. ILRIG's active involvement in the then operational Regional Development Forum provided the platform through which it could hand over to other more appropriately placed groups, distinctive areas of work such as that of media training. In effect, the formation of the Media Trainers' Forum which sought to take up media training, placed an additional burden on ILRIG personnel who were a major driving force behind the initiative. In some respects, this development defeated the initial purposes of rationalisation.

In conclusion, with regard to the organisation's focus, users were calling primarily for ILRIG's 'return' to its international labour brief. It appeared that as a secondary 'demand', they were requesting ILRIG to provide capacity in areas such as media, research and communication skills training. There seemed to be general consensus in the call for ILRIG to target trade unions as its primary 'users'.

5.2.7.2 The forms of ILRIG's service

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, ILRIG was noted for its production of booklets which featured the experiences and struggles of workers in other countries. Many users remembered ILRIG for and associated the organisation with these productions. Most respondents argued that while Workers World was a rigourous and accessible publication, it was insufficiently promoted and lacked an effective distribution strategy. Some

suggested that Workers World required an "aggressive marketing strategy" to popularise the journal; others suggested the creation of a "subscriber consciousness" among workers so as to ease the administrative burden of distribution on organisations; a further suggestion was commercialisation of the publication. Despite marketing problems, users felt that the publication provided the basis for work in other areas and that ILRIG ought to build on the work it put into the production of the magazine. In other words, it was argued that Workers World should relate to other aspects of ILRIG's operation far more integrally so that resources invested in the publication became maximised. A further suggestion made was that ILRIG publications such as Workers World, its posters and calendars be used as channels through which the organisation could give expression to its interactions with South African workers thereby granting the latter a voice or mouthpiece. Thus in addition to Workers World, ILRIG's other publications were also regarded as viable and useful.

With regard to its educational role, users felt that ILRIG should develop standardised packs and workshops which could be adapted for use by different organisations. It was suggested that the organisation adopt a more systematic approach to its educational function by designing a series of replicable workshops which could be run regularly. It was felt that such 'regulation' would provide a basis for regular contact between ILRIG and its users. To complement this approach, it was also suggested that ILRIG produce booklets and packages on topical issues and that the organisation deliver presentations on current international developments. These proposals were made in the context of COSATU's then educational strategy of offering its affiliates a 'modularised' educational programme. Again it

appeared that the federation's lack of a strong educational infrastructure and its attempts to build such a service, shaped the thinking among ILRIG's users who were often COSATU affiliates. At times, users appeared to want ILRIG to fill gaps and provide services which the federation might have been, or should have been providing, e.g. a number of users argued that ILRIG should pull workers from different unions together to run joint workshops to allow workers to interact and to develop worker leadership. While these suggestions are congruent with the organisation's intentions, there is potentially political uneasiness about a service organisation fulfilling a role which a mass organisation - the federation - should be undertaking. At the time COSATU argued that, in the long-term, it saw education becoming institutionalised within the federation whereby the latter would approach service organisations to meet specific needs such as developing materials and resources. In the medium term, COSATU designed 'modular, systematic staff development and training' programmes into which service organisations could be drawn to help the Federation build self-sufficiency. It was envisioned that NGOs could, for instance, contribute to the modules which COSATU had drawn up.

The area of strike support work and ILRIG's involvement in this was one which drew fairly controversial comments. A respondent from one of the unions with which ILRIG did a fair amount of strike support work which involved ILRIG providing programmes for striking workers, argued that the area of work opened up many questions which the service organisation needed to consider. Among these were the problem that ILRIG did not always follow up or follow through on interactions with workers in a striking situation. In other words, the group made contributions and raised

expectations, but did not always consolidate or build on work done or initiated in a strike. This meant that work was sometimes limited to once-off workshops and that workers were not helped with assessing and building on their experiences. It was felt that this was a crucial component of strike support work which in itself raised a pivotal problem of the extent to which a service organisation should become involved in the politics of a union. Other respondents argued, for instance, that service organisations should not be so integrally involved in strike support work since it was too interventionist a role for them to play. In other words, when the service organisation became involved in general union meetings (which were classified outside the realms of support work) this was encroaching on the domain of the union. A practical concern raised was how service organisations should respond to problems which workers might raise with them about their union and leadership. It was suggested that ILRIG discuss this issue with unions. The question of the extent of ILRIG's involvement in strike support work was thus never fully resolved but deferred for further discussion to some form of 'user group' which drew together ILRIG and its users. The issue of who controls information and ideas in an educational context, however, was usefully problematised by drawing attention to the tendency for workers to refer to a service organisation rather than their own structures for direction.

In summary, it appears that with regard to the forms of ILRIG's services, users were requesting:

- standardised educational workshops and packages;

- the continuation of Workers World with a more rigourous marketing

plan and greater adaptability of the publication to other forms of information provision;

- increased proactivity in the marketing of courses and accountability to unions/users in determining what education would be provided.

It can be argued then that 'forms' of service should not be viewed in isolation from issues of interaction with users which are dealt with in the following sub-section.

5.2.7.3 ILRIG's Interface with its Users

This sub-section deals with respondents' views on issues of accountability and marketing of services in ILRIG's daily interactions with its users.

Respondents praised ILRIG for its reliability, its commitment to empowering its users, the fact that the organisation prepared well for inputs and was generally "effective" in its delivery of service. It was argued that the organisation should be more proactive in marketing and promoting its services and less reactive to the demands of users. One respondent however introduced the caution that while proactivity might promote good ideas, service organisations could be interventionist on this basis by promoting ideas and strategies which conflicted with those of mass organisations. This problem though, should be resolved through greater accountability between service and mass organisations.

Proactivity was seen as a practice which could be linked to accountability in that the basis of the former was seen to be greater interaction with users. One of the mechanisms proposed for advancing both proactivity and accountability was the introduction of quarterly reports which could be used

both to reflect on a previous quarter's work and to propose plans for a forthcoming period. This recommendation linked closely to that of ILRIG standardising its educational programmes in that it was felt that the organisation could use the quarterly reports to advertise courses to unions. Essentially though, reports were identified as a mechanism through which ILRIG could have greater interaction with its users. It was also felt that ILRIG should market itself and its services more vigorously not only through brochures and written documentation, but through personal contact and communications with union structures. A further means of generating an ongoing interest in its work was seen as occurring through the organisation generating more public visibility. It was suggested that this could happen through ILRIG occupying a permanent slot in a popular periodical or issuing press statements on international developments to counteract propaganda in the mass media.

The issue of accountability attracted numerous responses, although there was general consensus that it paved the way for improved relations between groups in that each would know what to expect of the other and how to make parties account for their actions. A number of users asserted that since service organisations are not politically neutral, they should be made accountable to mass organisations. One of the respondents suggested that formal contracts are the most efficient basis upon which service and mass organisations should relate since other approaches to accountability get the service group too involved in the affairs of the union. Another user commented that accountability is not a formal device but a process of engagement between organisations. It appears that the tension in improving accountability is that there has to be a balance between monitoring the

work of a service group with a view to ensuring that the interests of mass organisations are met, and potentially silencing the 'will' or voice of an NGO since it is the nature of their 'independence' which allows them the time and space to produce new ideas and initiatives. In other words, mass organisations do not wish to create a subservience among service organisations which altogether inhibits their ability to take initiative and be proactive. This would surely be a form of censorship. At the same time, the potential for interventionism on the part of NGOs, as referred to above - what one respondent referred to as service organisations using education to "push a line" - is a problem to which organisations need to be alerted and one which must be constructively addressed so that valuable skills are harnessed and not alienated.

With regard to improving ILRIG's accountability to users, various respondents suggested that a user group which could oversee the interactions between ILRIG and its users be set up. It was argued that such a structure would allow unions to have some input into the direction and work of the service group. It was also felt that this was an important mechanism through which ILRIG could carry forward the process of interaction between itself and its users which the research had set in motion. The problem of who would represent workers on such a 'committee' was raised by one of the respondents, the point being that ILRIG would probably be relating to union officials rather than to workers. However, it was suggested that, should there be any discord around this problem, ILRIG and its users take it up through a forum and in a structured fashion.

Some respondents also noted that ILRIG should supplement rather than be a

substitute for trade union education, and that its interactions empower unions rather than develop dependency. It was strongly argued that in this regard, ILRIG have a more structured relationship with COSATU which would assist the latter develop its own capacity and self-sufficiency. On this point, COSATU itself suggested that it would favour entering into formal joint-venture contracts with service organisations so that the bases of relationships between mass and service organisations would be clearly defined.

On the issue of the composition and turnover of ILRIG staff, some respondents argued that ILRIG was "racially" imbalanced in that the organisation was predominantly "white", and that in addition, inconsistency crept into its relations with users because of the organisation's high staff turnover. It was felt that the former of these factors impacted negatively on users in that it created both cultural and language difficulties in workshops. Alongside this contention, it was argued that ILRIG should draw on the many trade unionists with international experience so that these people could act as role models to users to be trained to become effective educators themselves. In this regard it was felt that ILRIG had an obligation to reproduce its skills among its constituency of users. This could also happen through involving unions more integrally in the planning and running of workshops.

In summary, users called for:

- an increase in ILRIG's proactivity and promotion of its services;
- greater accountability to its users;

- more stability in its staff complement;

- more interaction with and imparting of a range of skills to users.

In considering these various contributions, it appears that users were asking ILRIG to empower and enskill them both conceptually, i.e. in terms of the content of its courses, and practically, i.e. in terms of the 'hard' skills imparted. The arguments made for the improved interaction between the NGO and its users hinge on the former improving the provision of skills and information to the latter.

5.2.8 Conclusions regarding the ILRIG case

This sub-section refers back to the primary objectives of the evaluation study and offers some commentary on what the findings contribute to these. To recall, the primary research objectives were to evaluate:

the appropriateness of ILRIG's current service in relation to user needs; and

ways in which ILRIG identifies user needs and the extent to which they address these.

Gauging from respondents' comments outlined above, users argued variously both for the appropriateness of ILRIG's services on some levels of provision as well as the need for the NGO to change some aspects of its service in order to render it more 'appropriate' in relation to user needs. Over and above the request for a sharpening of ILRIG's subject focus which was seen by users as a primary area of the organisation's operations in need of change, there was an overwhelming call for greater interaction

between the service organisation and its users. In fact there was also a call for delimiting the scope of ILRIG's primary users to trade unions. Many of the technical and political difficulties surrounding the extent to which a service organisation should encroach on the organisational matters of its users or the union, are issues which it was felt could be dealt with collectively by the organisations if they had the commitment and a mechanism through which to do so. It also appears from the above comments that ILRIG had been inactive in soliciting user information and education needs. Apart from its in-house publications such as Workers World, the NGO relied largely on requests received to determine its output. In this respect, it was argued that ILRIG had not been proactive in identifying user needs and negotiating with users the best ways of addressing these. However, it should be noted that where the organisation determined user needs albeit through a request for information, the organisation was usually conscientious about attending to these.

It appears then that the primary aspects of the interface between ILRIG and its users are the roles that each assume in relation to the other and the mechanism through which they relate. It is in this framework that the notion of 'users' appears somewhat outdated. If due consideration is given to the fact that respondents were requesting a mechanism of interaction between themselves and ILRIG which would allow them some say in directing the work of the organisation, they become participants with inputs into the system rather than simply recipients using a service. In other words, the interface between ILRIG and its 'users' introduces, from a systems theory perspective, the notion of an information system, prompting reconsideration of the components of such a system. The notion of users has to be

broadened to incorporate users as participants in and as contributors to the system. As Underwood writes:

> The culture of the organisation maintaining the system, together with the values, beliefs and behavioural norms of the individuals involved with the system ... prescribe and assign roles for the system and for the participants ... the "soft" systems approach ... may also be viewed as a systems approach to information-handling in organisations: one which emphasises components and relationships rather than tasks and procedures. The systems approach tries to integrate information about people, procedures, problems and performance rather than trying to deal with each as a separate notion (1993: 28-32).

The ILRIG case has shown that its users are interested in a more engaging, interactive relationship with NGOs; one which allows them greater access not to the daily administrative running of the organisation, but to decision-making regarding the services offered and provided by such groups. Users argued that they need a say in determining what kinds of education and information services they receive. Implicit in their arguments is that improved interaction between themselves and service organisations would engender greater consideration of their information requirements. In such a context users could also assume greater responsibility for their information needs and initiate ideas in this regard. The call seems to be for greater collaboration and cooperation between service and mass organisations in identifying and mediating the information needs of users. While the notion of a partnership was never clearly voiced by interviewees, it appears that this captures the gist of proposals regarding greater interaction between service organisations and users.

The ILRIG case has further indicated that increasing collaboration between services and users is essential for an effective interface between a service organisation with more or less appropriate services and constituencies that

require and rely upon such services for their work in development. The case has illustrated that the interface is about the appropriate mediation of information to contribute towards development. It has also shown that cooperation involves the appropriate mediation of requests and needs on the part of users to utilise the service for its purposes.

5.3 Section Three: The ERIP case

5.3.1 Introduction

The unfolding nature of the ERIP investigation represents a sharp contrast to that of ILRIG. In other words, the research process followed from the point of separating the cases differed significantly. While the objectives - which were commonly arrived at by all three parties (the two organisations and the researcher) - were intended to provide the background and framework to ongoing research with the organisations, the unfolding research process revealed a lack of consensus between the researcher and ERIP regarding the intentions of and procedures to be followed in the ensuing investigation. The ERIP case constitutes what has been referred to as a failed case in chapter four, revealing a research path divergent from that originally intended. It is primarily the flaws in the planned research process which are of issue in the discussion of the second case.

This section aims to present the ERIP case study as it unfolded. In the first instance, ERIP's organisational purpose, orientation and history are briefly discussed to provide evidence of the suitability of the case to this investigation. The organisation's aims, principles and targeted user population are also discussed. After this, the section documents the research process, so as to introduce the reader to a concrete example of a

failed case as discussed in chapter four. This section includes a discussion of what was called a 'modified' investigation denoting a change in direction from the original research plan. Lastly, this section interprets the research process to express from the researchers' perspective, what indeed the flaws were that rendered the case a failure.

The primary sources for the first two sub-sections outlined immediately below are interviews, annual reports and organisational documents made available to the researcher. The latter sub-sections draw primarily on interviews and research documentation.

5.3.2 A brief organisational orientation and history

ERIP began its operations as the Education Resource and Information Centre (ERIC) which was set up in response to school boycotts in 1980. Its initial purpose was to service the needs of teachers who required material for alternative 'awareness' programmes being organised for boycotting school students. The organisation's overall purpose was to feed into the development of mass organisation including trade unions, women's, student, youth and civic organisations.

Interviewees noted that, more especially in the 1980's, ERIP always operated on the basis of its allegiance to the Freedom Charter and although servicing largely the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) constituencies playing an important role in the building of student organisation in the 1980's, it also served groups outside of the UDF alliance. As a service agency though, it has attempted to be non-interventionist in its work with users by, for instance, not exploiting what sometimes became obstructive politics in the democratic movement.

For example, the organisation maintained a distance from the 'popularist/workerist' debate current in the 1980's. ERIP's motivation for this approach was its belief that mass-based organisations rather than NGOs should take political decisions to direct their course (cf chapter three for a discussion of the nature of the relationship between mass and service organisations). The ERIP case adds an interesting dimension to this debate in their argument that NGOs usually have more resources at their disposal than do mass organisations, and for this reason are ideally located and equipped for interventionism. However, it should be said that a principled commitment does not in itself guarantee practical implementation. Thus, while NGOs or mass structures for that matter may subscribe to certain principles, the extent to which they uphold these is what is borne out historically.

Originally, ERIC was based on the operations of seven working groups which aimed to generate resources which had to be complemented by training programmes. The organisation sought to make resources active, thus identifying a close relationship between the provision of resources and education and training. The rationale behind the link was that through education and enskilling programmes, learners were enabled to use information in taking on the challenges of transformation. To exemplify, in early 1983, with the process of the UDF formation, ERIP produced a package called the "Koornhof Bills and PC Proposals". Users of these packs participated in a half day workshop which familiarised them with the documentation and showed them how to use the packs in community settings to educate others. This process which constituted a 'training of the trainers', enabled users to use the resources to maximum effect. At an early

stage, therefore, ERIP was concerned with the issues of resource use and the usability of information.

During the 1980's, ERIC was one of the few service organisations working with mass-organisations in the field. For a number of years, its primary constituency was students and youth and it maintained and built a cohesiveness among student leadership, developing their capacity through training programmes. For example, what was known as the Coordinating Student Structure was taken through a training programme which was geared to feed skills and course experiences back into grass-roots structures. Through the training programmes, ERIP provided participants with confidence and contacts to facilitate the development of mass-based organisation. The aims of the training programmes were:

- to build organisations, mainly Student Representative Councils (SRCs); and

- to identify needs that students had so that links could be made with national struggles.

In the 1985 period, with the formation of the NECC, ERIP was asked by the UDF to cater for the education area which had been neglected. The idea of having a 'Winter School' for school students was mooted independently to assist with the development of Congress of South African Students (COSAS), one of ERIP's prime constituents at the time. This event was held in 1985, drawing together youth from schools with the purpose of developing young leadership. The 'Winter School' aimed to:

- build organisations by working with students;

- begin the process of leadership training;
- provide learners with organisational skills; and
- build capacity, empowering students and youth to engage more ably in struggles around transformation.

ERIC's work with students and youth marked the practical application of the conceptual development of 'people's education'. In other words, the NGO was one of the first sites which grappled with advancing the theory of providing learners with education and skills that were appropriate to their setting and needs. ERIC's affiliation to the NECC allowed them the opportunity and support to perform this path-breaking role, and to take forward a more popular form of education at a grass roots level.

The move to concentrate on an adult constituency, as will be seen below, also coincided with the 'mainstreaming' of people's education which had come to involve curriculum development in formal educational settings. The organisation had come to acknowledge that their work with students had been embryonic in nature and sewn the seeds for further expansion. ERIC thus consciously moved into the area of community development. It decided to take its experience of 'people's education' which, as noted, was developed through practical work with students, into adult civic society. With the realisation that 'people's education' was not simply an academic concept, and given its experience in the area, ERIC considered itself an ideal vehicle to posit formulation and interpretation on how 'people's education' could be taken into a community development context. At this time, i.e. in the latter part of the 1980's, ERIC still shared a strong link with the NECC and thus developed its notion of 'people's education' in a community

development framework within this context.

During 1990 and 1991, ERIP abandoned its Youth Training Project for a number of reasons, one of which was the increasing dependency of student leadership on the organisation. This move signals the organisation's caution in dealing with the relationship between service and mass organisations. Implicit in the action to break down dependency is the organisation's concern with building self-sufficiency among its constituents.

5.3.3 Organisational aims, principles and targeted user group

At the time of its inception, ERIC defined its organisational aims as follows:

the establishment of an educational resource library, containing materials that would be of use to organisations;

the production of educational material if such material did not already exist;

assisting organisations with workshops and educational programmes and providing necessary back-up for such programmes;

researching issues at the request of organisations;

providing access to typewriters, audio-visual equipment, media and printing facilities (ERIP Confidential Report: 1).

In 1988 ERIC relocated its offices to the University of the Western Cape (UWC) and became reconstituted as ERIP. This move was accompanied by a reorientation of the organisation's aims, as detailed below. In its Annual Report projecting plans for 1992/93, the organisation notes that "given

political developments in the country, ERIP at the start of 1991 redefined its aims and objectives" to be:

to increase the potential and capacity of the community and community-based organisations (CBOs) to reach out, to serve, and to involve those who live in the community in the social, political, economic, educational and cultural life of the community;

to provide information and resources relevant to members of the community and community based organisations;

to empower members of these organisations with leadership skills;

to harness the knowledge, skills and resources of the University of the Western Cape in such a way that these may further serve the needs of the community (ERIP Annual Report, 1991: 1).

The different sets of aims indicate a shift in focus from simple resource provision to the mobilisation and mediation of information through an increasing emphasis on education work. The educational dimension of ERIP's operation has not only taken shape through its training courses. It has also been rooted in an emphasis on researching, producing and repackaging materials for use by mass organisations. Given this practice of 'activating' information and enskilling users to engage more effectively with resources and their environments, ERIP seems to have been implementing many characteristics of interactive information work. It is surprising, as will be seen below, that the organisation did an about-turn by breaking with its tradition of an integration of information and education work and introducing instead a sharp divide between its Resource Department and its Training

Department of the 1990s. This chasm had some bearing on the study as will be shown below.

The last fifteen years have also seen a shift in ERIP's targeted user population. While the 1980s saw a clear emphasis on working with students and youth, ERIP's 1991 Annual Report notes that within its targeted constituency of "organisations in disadvantaged black communities ... the main beneficiaries of programmes have been adults rather than students and youth only, and often specifically women" (1991: 1). Interviewees also noted that increasingly national organisations were using ERIP to train their education and organising staff. The shift in aims and targeted user constituencies thus became manifest in a concentration on education and leadership training programmes which tend to lean away from ERIP's initial strong-hold, viz. its well established and creative resource wing and function.

With regard to ERIP's organisational principles, throughout its history, those of democracy, accountability and empowerment have been emphasised.

Accountability has pertained both in the sense of the NGO's accountability to mass structures and in terms of its attempts to build accountability within these structures and between itself and its users in carrying out its work. Historically, accountability has operated through ERIP's working with mandated structures and organisations. Increasingly, it has come to occur through mandated processes with ERIP and participants forming committees to plan programmes. At one stage in its history, to strengthen ERIP's commitment to accountability and its grass-roots orientation, staff had to be members of mass organisations. Contact with mass organisation started

breaking down for a number of reasons including:

- changes in ERIP's steering committee structure which had to do with confusion around whether community organisational representatives were present in their organisational or individual capacities;

- the need for ERIP to become more proactive and less reactive placing greater emphasis on strategic thinking happening within the organisation and staff investing energies and time to this end;

- the mass organisational lull in the late 1980s.

Evident in its historical structures is also the organisation's effort to function under the discipline of mass organisation. Thus ERIC's Working Committee - its decision and policy making structure which preceded the formation of its Steering Committee - insofar as possible was made up of members active in mass organisations. Prior to the formalisation of these mass structures, the Working Committee comprised people active in the information field. Over the years, with the changing emphasis of ERIC's work as noted earlier, the composition of the Working Committee came to include more persons active in the education and training arena. In the mid to late 1980s, ERIP's affiliation to the NECC (Western Cape Branch) marked its attempt to formalise its structured accountability to the democratic movement. Accompanying the organisation's move to UWC, ERIP's Steering Committee which replaced ERIC's Working Committee, included two UWC representatives, two persons from community organisations and its three departmental coordinators. This structure remains the policy and primary decision-making body which oversees all the organisation's work.

In keeping with its focus on mass organisation, ERIP understood empowerment occurring through building organisation, i.e. developing the vehicle which will bring about change. Based on this, at no stage has ERIP simply worked with individuals. The organisation has always emphasised the importance of working with mandated structures. An example of the process of empowerment would be as follows: an initial training programme would be held with a core group of mandated students. These participants would be accountable to their student structures and not to ERIC or themselves. These participants would usually be taken through the organisation's 'Winter School Programme' as well a 'Spring' follow-up. There was thus always a strong attempt to ensure that through its work, ERIP built mass-based organisations.

A final point worth mentioning is that while this brief account of the ERIP operation has emphasised its relationship with mass-based organisation, the agency has through its work built close ties with other NGOs and has also shared skills with these agencies. This collaboration has meant that ERIP has been part of and fed into developments within the service organisational sector generally. In more recent years, this has occurred through its involvement in regional and national NGO networks which have addressed issues of rationalisation in the service sector in the context of development.

It should be noted that at the time of the interviews, ERIP was increasingly identifying the need for specialisation in its focus. This prompted the desire to problematise and theorise its work, which in part is precisely what this investigation intended doing. Given this confluence of intent on the part of the organisation and the researcher, it is unfortunate that this investigation did not materialise in accordance with its design and was therefore not able

to contribute to ERIP's need for reflection.

The next sub-section documents the research process followed in the ERIP case study. As has been explained above, it reports on the unfolding developments of events which resulted in the failure of the case to meet the objectives outlined in the original research design. However, the case study yields interesting findings not only for evaluation researchers, but also with regard to issues pertaining to the mediation of information.

5.3.4 The research process

At the time of the ERIP investigation, the organisation was in the throes of discussing the need for a major evaluation. The relationship between this study and that intended by ERIP was, however, never discussed in detail so that the question of how these potentially parallel studies impacted upon or could benefit from each other remained unresolved, aside from a verbal acknowledgement by researcher and organisation that it would be productive to dove-tail the two processes so that they were complementary rather than conflicting.

At the start of the ERIP investigation, the process followed the intended course of interviewing the organisation's staff. The intention was to use these discussions to orientate the evaluator who would then have discussions with staff who were 'supervised' by the coordinators. Interviews were held with the three departmental coordinators in place at the time, and also with three additional staff members active in the resource centre. The last interview with a departmental coordinator identified problems in the research process. These revolved around the reluctance of staff within the coordinator's/interviewee's department to participate in the

research process due to their lack of understanding of the purpose of the investigation. The problems were identified by both the researcher and the interviewee who agreed that these difficulties would be brought to a meeting of the research parties, viz. ERIP and the researcher. The purpose of the meeting was seen as being to resolve problems in the study and to pave the way for continuation of the research (cf correspondence).

In preparation for this meeting, the researcher drew on correspondence with the organisation to sketch both a best and a worst case scenario. The former suggested ERIP's re-commitment to the study alongside consideration of the form of the organisation's relationship to the study and the researcher, while the latter proposed termination of the study. The considerations which pertained to the best case scenario included:

how the research was regarded by ERIP, i.e. whether it was categorised as "useful but distant" research which was not prioritised by ERIP staff, or whether it became absorbed into the organisation's operations in a more integrated way with, for example, regular reports to staff meetings;

how the investigation utilised and/or fed into ERIP's indepth evaluation and overall planning for the following year;

how the findings of the research could affect the debates occurring at the time around funding of NGOs and the developmental nature of their work;

public accessibility of the final report; and

how the researchers' work and political background both in terms of

a previous work placement with ILRIG but a closer political affiliation with ERIP, would influence the study.

It was envisaged that consideration of these issues would lead to a more productive relationship and process. However, these issues were never addressed at the meeting. Instead, the gathering identified a problematic relationship between the researcher and the organisation attributed to misunderstandings and misconceptions about the research focus. This proposition begged the question: what were the factors which led to the breakdown in the research process? Misapprehension clearly suggests a communication flaw and points to a problem in the research design such as whether the research proposal and letters constituted a written contract. It also suggests that the negotiation process (as discussed in chapter four) failed to seal an agreement which suited the needs of both parties (in this case ERIP and the researcher). However, as Morphet notes, when working within the qualitative and illuminative framework, events have to be understood to occur within a milieu in which multiple realities (cf chapter two) and multiple causality are at play (1987: 137-138). It is therefore necessary when addressing the issue of breakdown, to consider the interests of the full range of stakeholders involved in the interchange in order to present an analysis of the findings. It would be unsatisfactory and indeed short-sighted to see only the actions or lack of action on the part of the researcher as leading to failure of the case. Instead, the interests of the different actors or agents interconnected by albeit a broadly-defined common purpose as well as the circumstances of the investigation, should be considered to arrive at a deeper understanding of what went wrong. The purpose behind such an approach is not to share or spread thin or even lay

blame. It is to present a more comprehensive view on why things fall apart so as to yield recommendations for those engaged in similar operations in the future, lest they err in the same way.

Before proceeding with an analysis of the reasons for failure which will allow for the presentation of a synthesised case report, further narrative of the unfolding nature of events will be provided so that the reader is able to relate the interpretive discussion to an account of events.

Through correspondence following the meeting which defined the research relationship as "historically problematic", the researcher attempted to clarify some areas of apparent confusion to the organisation with a view to 'salvaging' the proposed study. The correspondence detailed discussion of the following issues from the researcher's perspective, the point being to secure agreement to proceed with the research:

the organisational base being investigated, i.e. the entire organisation as opposed to only the resource centre;

expansion of the research problem;

the 'focus' of the research as discussed with ILRIG;

the evaluative nature and depth of the research;

the working relationship between the researcher and the organisation;

the conditions of the study.

In discussing these issues, the researcher referred the organisation to documentation already deposited with them both to maintain the brevity of

the correspondence and to draw on the body of existent information surrounding the investigation. Implicit in this action was the researcher's highlighting the fact that the organisation had already been privy to many of the arguments being summarised and reiterated in the then-current correspondence.

The organisation responded to this communication by suggesting that while they would still like to assist the researcher in completion of the study, they wished to restrict their participation to "a study of ERIP as a whole with a focus on information services (resource centres)" (private correspondence from ERIP to Karelse, 20/2/92: 2). This delimitation would have restricted the researcher from investigating the information dimensions of other components of ERIP's operations, for instance, its education and training work. The organisation further indicated that they understood confusion creeping into the working relationship between researcher and the organisation "partly because of the expansion of [the researcher's]... original proposal and partly out of [the researcher's]... discussions with ILRIG as to the scope of the study" (private correspondence from ERIP to Karelse, 20/2/92: 1). They also identified "different interpretations of terminology" between the researcher and the organisation, and "a mutual failure to arrive at concrete 'contractual' or working arrangements for the study" as additional reasons for the breakdown in the research process (private correspondence from ERIP to Karelse, 20/2/92: 1).

The next turn which the case took involved further communications between the researcher and the project in which the former posed, through written correspondence, "counter-proposals to the 'salvaging option'" (private correspondence from Karelse to ERIP, 28/2/92: 1). In other words,

the researcher's intention shifted away from a desire to get the research back on track. Instead, the researcher sketched two proposals, the second of which was adopted by the organisation. In summary, these were:

1) Proposal One:

To document the findings of the case produced to that point. The information had been obtained from a series of planning and strategising contact meetings; the six staff interviews held with ERIP staff; and documentation about ERIP's operations as presented in the organisation's annual and other reports. It was argued that a case record would serve to illuminate, highlight and illustrate issues raised in the conceptual component of the dissertation which dealt with the nature of service organisations. It was further proposed that inclusion of information about ERIP's organisational formation would provide greater insight into the ILRIG case, by discussing similarities and differences in the two organisations' working methodologies and experiences.

2) Proposal Two:

The second proposal which was found acceptable to the organisation, extended beyond the cut-off point of the first. It suggested that in keeping with reflexive analysis as discussed in chapter four, the researcher investigate the 'breakdown' in the study through a 'modified' investigation. It was argued that this would enhance the use-value of the study by adding to the body of evaluation research, especially through its exploration of political problems encountered in such endeavours.

The agreement to adopt the second proposal as the basis on which to proceed with the study, led to interview guides being circulated to ERIP's three departmental coordinators and a fourth staff member who had been integrally involved in the study, in preparation for a second round of interviews (cf Appendix 7). These discussions sought to establish, from the perspective of interviewees, factors which affected the breakdown in communication between the researcher and the organisation. In this respect, the interview guide contains a distinct bias. It presumes from the outset that communication which appears as a localised problem, was the primary cause of the 'breakdown'. In other words, the interviews did not directly explore other factors such as ERIP's possible reluctance - which could relate to a host of reasons - to engage with the proposed research project or the researcher. Despite this short-coming however, some of the questions posed elicited from interviewees responses which indicated that there were factors other than communication which contributed to the collapse of the case study. In this way, as is shown below, themes other than communication were developed further. These were checked with respondents through member checks (cf chapter four): interviewees validated and commented on their transcripts before these were accepted as evidence gathered for the case. However, it should be noted that in terms of this study, communication has been used as a rubric to include communication flow between researcher and organisation as well as consideration of factors which influenced the perspectives and actions of communicators. Given this understanding, investigation of the 'breakdown in communication' assumes a much wider scope than simply rehearsing the content of the communications between researcher and organisation.

The following section explores issues raised in the interviews of the modified investigation in an attempt to provide an interpretive account of the failed case. It includes an effort to move beyond the interview findings in presenting an abstracted view of how various forces combine in the socio-political milieu to produce 'results' that are not always sought.

5.3.5 Analysing the ERIP case

It has been argued that, on the basis of reflexive methodology, the ERIP case constitutes failure in relation to the initial intentions and objectives of the research. In other words, the study did not achieve its primary objectives. Instead, a different research path was followed.

This section aims to analyse the case according to the following themes derived from both the second round of interviews as well as the researcher's reflection on the process. While the themes will be listed for the purposes of transparency and making them apparent, due to the inter-relatedness of items, they will not only be discussed under their discrete headings. Instead, the discussion of the themes will attempt to illuminate their interconnectedness. This should obviate idiosyncrasies and reductionism in trying to identify singular causes for failure of the case. The themes which emerge from unitisation and categorisation of the research findings are:

conditions and factors pertaining to the study:

  This category aimed to identify factors which surrounded the case study bearing either directly or indirectly on it.

the communication system operative within the framework of the

study:

The intention here was to identify problems surrounding communications between the parties with a view to understanding how these actions impacted upon the study. 'Communications' is used to denote not only concrete evidence of correspondence but also the interchange between ERIP and the researcher. As noted earlier, an attempt is made to consider factors which influenced communicators and their actions.

additional factors associated with the breakdown of the study:

This category aimed to glean from the responses which issues were associated with the breakdown in interviewees' constructions and mental images of why things went awry. The purpose here is to identify 'associational factors' since participants' constructions of why the breakdown occurred might highlight issues otherwise overlooked in other categories.

positive aspects associated with the study:

This category was constructed to lay the basis for a presentation of positive recommendations regarding interactions around the case.

These categories will each be considered in turn although the reader should be reminded that the categories comprise a set and are integrated to represent a "an explanatory theory, or at least particular construction of the situation at hand" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 343).

The interpretation of the data required the researcher to be sensitive to the

multiple perspectives in the organisation: ERIP is an organisation made up of different persons and, as with all organisational formations, is not homogeneous. Its staff bring different and divergent and sometimes converging opinions and experiences to the organisation. For this reason, this research has encountered the problem of reporting differing views expressed on various matters within the organisation. In accordance with Parlett and Dearden who assert that: "Illuminative research does not claim to be 'value free' or to be capable of 'total objectivity'", the researcher has made every attempt to report "different value positions, ideologies, and opinions encountered in the course of the investigation; and, moreover to represent them in ways considered fair by those holding those positions" (1977: 33). Thus the following analytical report which is based on the interview findings of four respondents, attempts to convey to the reader as broad a view as possible of the comments made in relation to the question at stake, viz: what factors contributed to the breakdown of the study, and by implication, how are these avoidable in the future?

5.3.5.1 Conditions and factors pertaining to the study

a) Academic and organisational interests

One of the primary issues emanating from the modified investigation was the researcher's location in both academic and organisational domains, and her attempt to merge the concerns of these sometimes conflicting environments through the course of the study. Respondents suggested that at times there was a tension between the interests of academia and those of organisations. For example, while organisations could benefit from the rigour of academic research conventions, the drawn out nature of academic

research often conflicts with the pace at which organisations operate because the former require lengthy research procedures which cannot be circumvented.

A further issue in relation to academia, was the general opinion within ERIP that the study was too academic in nature. Given ERIP's orientation and its relocation to UWC, which prompted its grappling with the implications of being in an academic environment, it was particularly sensitised to being absorbed or overwhelmed by academia (cf 5.3.5.1 (b) below). Given ERIP's 'popular culture', the study's academic slant caused the organisation some degree of alienation.

b) The researcher's uneven degrees of familiarity with ILRIG and ERIP

It was felt by ERIP that the researcher, having worked at ILRIG, understood this organisation far better than she did ERIP and that she should have acquainted herself far more vigorously with the latter's work style. This, ERIP argued, would have enabled the researcher to recognise the need to be more forthcoming and demanding in dealings with ERIP than she in fact was.

It was also argued that given the researcher's working relationship with ILRIG, it was unfair to make comparisons between the two case studies in the sense of regarding ILRIG a success and ERIP, a failure. It was argued that it was partly because of ILRIG's academic orientation, that the study overcame some of the barriers which were stumbling blocks in the ERIP instance. In contrast to ILRIG, it was stated that ERIP does not have an academic orientation, and perhaps in its historical practices has even counter-posed academic with grass-roots work.

c) Reorganisation of ERIP

With regard to timing of the study, it was said that the researcher was approaching the organisation at a time when they were busy reorganising themselves. At the time, ERIP was without an official head, and in the process of trying to find a suitable Director. This person was eventually appointed during the course of the investigation, i.e. about one and a half years after commencement of the study. This meant that for a long period of the study, the three departmental coordinators were shouldering a range of responsibilities and the study became "an irritation" in the context of their enormous workloads. This was one of the factors resulting in the study being regarded with a lack of seriousness on the part of ERIP. At the same time, attempts at decentralisation within ERIP meant that there was little collective time to problematise and discuss the proposed research. While decentralisation presumably implies an improvement in organisational democracy, the tendency within ERIP appeared to signal a conflict between structure and principle. In other words, the act of restructuring the organisation resulted in an effective decline in the ease of intra-organisational communications and decision-making. Thus there was little collective consideration of the investigation.

d) The importance with which resource centre work was regarded within ERIP

As noted earlier in the ERIP case, a chasm emerged within ERIP between the Resource and the Education & Training Departments. Resource centre work was regarded as less important and enjoyed lower priority than other departmental work and hence was treated less seriously than, for example,

the work of the Education and Training Department. Because the study, in ERIP's view, was linked strictly to the work of the Resource Department, it suffered the status of the latter and became less important to the organisation constituting a further factor leading to its deprioritisation.

Of further importance is that at the time of the study, ERIP's Resource Department was also grappling with its future and role and, while these issues could usefully have been addressed through the investigation, instead it meant that the department which was intended to house the study, was in a weak position, and unable to avoid its (the study's) 'demise'.

e) ERIP's attitude towards the study

Respondents felt that the study was a step removed from the daily workings of ERIP and was not pressing and therefore never prioritised. Hence there was no sense of urgency in the way in which ERIP dealt with the study. For this reason, i.e. because the work was never prioritised, it was also never popularised. As a result, only a few staff were knowledgeable about the research proposal. Concurrently, strategic issues were almost always controlled by certain strategic persons in the organisation, reproducing the organisation's dominant power relations. A further factor noted was that due to the time-consuming nature of democratising knowledge, insufficient time was being spent to extend knowledge of the study to other staff members. The lack of communication, contrary to the intention of decentralisation, coupled with ERIP's apparent distance from and deprioritisation of the investigation, contributed to disaffection with the study.

Further, the research was seen as a case study of ERIP over which the

organisation had no control and there was apprehension about the extent to which the study would interfere with ERIP's work. Put another way, 'ownership' of the study was seen to lie outside of ERIP and even though the opportunity to identify more closely with the study was repeatedly presented to the organisation, the latter never seized it and thus did not shape the investigation according to its requirements. Implicit in this analysis is the fact that the researcher primarily determined the nature of the interaction and to a large extent, the organisation was, in the words of one respondent, "marching to [her] pace". It is clear that these fears (ERIP's lack of control of the study; encroachment of the investigation on organisational priorities), coupled with ERIP's distaste for the academic nature of the investigation, gave rise to the organisation's reticence in relation to the study. In addition, the question of whether an outsider should do an evaluation of the organisation was never resolved. The organisation did, however, indicate its preference for contracting researchers itself.

5.3.5.2 The communication system operative within the framework of the study

a) Confusion surrounding the research focus

A number of ERIP staff understood the focus of the research to be an analysis of its resource centre's purpose and methodology in a context of change. This understanding prevailed among ERIP staff with the result that those staff who had no relation to the resource centre felt that they were completely unaffected by the study and became disgruntled by attempts to interview them. This comment triggers clear signals in accordance with those above (cf 5.3.5.1(d)) that, at some levels, or for some employees,

ERIP's departments were fairly segregated. In other words, programmes in the resource centre were self-contained and did not affect other work or workers in the organisation. This presumption is in conflict with the view asserted in chapter three regarding the integration of information and education work and even with ERIP's own history of inter-relating its information and education components. Unfortunately, the information component of the education work carried out by ERIP was never investigated, but it would have been helpful to bring an 'integrationist' perspective back to the organisation.

To return to the issue at hand, there was apparent confusion within ERIP itself as to the focus of the research. In contrast to the view expressed above, viz. that the study was an investigation of the Resource Department, certain staff understood that the research would be investigating the information work carried out by the organisation from within its full range of departments. Among these staff members, there was agreement with the conceptual model of the integration of information, education and development work being posed by the researcher. These staff members felt that an investigation into whether ERIP was adopting such an integrated approach to its work would be beneficial to the organisation.

The important matter here though, is that there was certainly confusion within the organisation as to the research brief and its scope. Some factors which contributed to the misconception and misinterpretation which crept into the study are dealt with in (b) and (c) below.

b) Problems with communications from the researcher

Many of the criticisms raised here coincide with those raised above. They

are re-stated as particular concerns in relation to the researcher's role and thus detail more specifically the researcher's perspective.

It was felt that the researcher should have been more demanding at the very outset of the investigation about ERIP's commitment to the study. There was too great a presumption on the part of the researcher about the organisation's commitment to the study and too little sensitivity to ERIP's discomfort with the nature of the study. This lack of empathy with the organisation's awkwardness in relation to the study resulted in the inappropriate pitch of some of the communications. It was suggested that the researcher, as has been noted earlier, assumed too many common denominators in her treatment of ILRIG and ERIP. The evidence for this was that, in the spirit of democracy and transparency, common communications were sent to the two organisations. One particular set of communications which was well received by ILRIG, was too academic and removed from ERIP's organisational reality at the time, to have made any positive impact. If anything, this document aggravated the situation by estranging ERIP staff even further from the study than they had been at the time. Staff felt that this correspondence would have been far better received and of greater benefit to the organisation, had the researcher workshopped its contents rather than circulated the document. Thus it was argued that the researcher should have treated the organisations differently and separately from the onset of the investigation.

Furthermore, it was argued that the way in which interviews were set up was problematic in that, whereas interviews were simply scheduled with individuals after written correspondence to the organisation, the researcher should have attended an ERIP staff meeting to brief people about the

purpose of the interviews and should have discussed time-frames so that ERIP was able to include this process in its list of priorities. In other words, greater face-to-face interactions between the researcher and the project could have allowed contradictions in the research design and process to have surfaced a lot earlier, and simultaneously acquainted the organisation as a whole with the study, thus improving its status within the group. The positive side of the extent of written communications to the project meant that when contact was made, it was recorded. It was felt that the study could have been even further neglected by ERIP had the researcher failed to document interactions with the group.

The fact that the researcher arranged to have most of the interviews at ERIP's Community House office rather than at its UWC headquarters, again meant that the study remained distant from the thrust of the organisation's work and that many of the ERIP staff remained unaware of the study. Had the researcher been more visible at the UWC offices, her presence would have helped generate an interest in the study and would have served to popularise it among ERIP staff, making it more of a serious issue for the organisation.

It was suggested that the researcher should have requested an overall coordinator or overseer from ERIP for the duration of the investigation. As things stood, the coordinator assigned to oversee the study changed a number of times. It was argued that continuity in coordinatorship could have contributed to the success of the investigation.

It was further noted that the researcher determined the pace of the study and that because it unfolded so slowly, ERIP accordingly treated it with a

lack of rigour and prioritisation. Factors which contributed to the pace of the investigation were as follows:

- the parallel conduct of the ERIP and ILRIG investigations meant that procedures took twice as long;

- the academic nature of the study with its various research techniques, as noted earlier, resulted in protraction.

c) Problems with communications from ERIP

In retrospect, staff agreed that ERIP should have asked the researcher to workshop the idea of an evaluation study of the organisation's information work. The organisation could also have requested that the details of the contract be more rigorously discussed and recorded so that issues such as time frames and research process were clearer to all parties. ERIP could thus have taken greater initiative in setting the terms, purpose and course of the study. In contradistinction to the rigour with which the researcher documented communications, the organisation never grappled with these substantially, nor did it record its reservations and comments. It was agreed by respondents that ERIP should have communicated its reservations about the study more rigorously and in writing. The organisation could also have discussed the research more extensively at a staff level to increase everyone's awareness of what was happening in the study.

A further problem from the organisation's side was that contact people liaising with the researcher about the study changed a number of times over the two year period of interaction. There was therefore an inconsistency in the way ERIP engaged with the study. The lack of consistency in

coordinatorship of the study further resulted in a failure both to clarify how the study would benefit the organisation, and to process the study through its channels. It was felt that these tendencies could have been avoided through the concentrated efforts of a coordinator who had the time and enriched understanding to digest, deconstruct and mediate problems surrounding the research.

d) A summary of weaknesses in the communication system

In summary the following factors were attributed to the prevalence of a weak communication system:

the extent to which the researcher and her work were known or not known within the organisation was a factor which clearly influenced the organisation's attitude to the study. In other words, the organisation's general lack of familiarity with the investigation impacted negatively on the success of the study;

the extent of common understanding of the study both between the researcher and ERIP and within ERIP itself stemmed from weak communication and at the same time hindered further communications;

the long gap between the initial contact made by the researcher and that following it meant that the communication flow was both slow and staggered making it difficult to build a momentum for the study;

the failure to formalise a contract relating to the research detailing items such as time-frame and methodology meant that there was nothing binding the parties to a clear agreement;

the familiarity between the parties (the fact that the researcher and key persons within the organisation knew one another) sometimes meant that communications were casual and less formal than they should have been.

In addition to these points it was felt that both the researcher and ERIP failed to construct a mechanism through which to engage with differences pertaining to the study. Such a forum would have created the space for building consensus or finding ways of working with differences in approach and opinion. In the absence of such a mechanism, too many substantive issues such as the scope of the study were neglected and/or taken for granted. A forum would thus have facilitated decision-making. In this regard its was argued that there was an imbalance in the decision-making process: whereas the researcher was one person, ERIP was an organisation of 10 - 12 people. It was therefore assumed to be much easier for the researcher than the organisation to arrive at decisions and/or to communicate. A further issue related to that of the missing forum, was the realisation that the research parties (ERIP and the researcher) had met too infrequently and had had insufficient contact.

A number of respondents argued that the misunderstanding about the scope of the study as an identified problem was not insurmountable and that this could have been resolved through discussion. The way in which this matter was handled aggravated the problem and made communications unpleasant.

5.3.5.3 Additional factors associated with the breakdown of the study

Exploration of the incidents in this category aim to balance the prominence which those surrounding communication have assumed in this investigation

so as to provide a holistic view of the context of the breakdown. They also alert the reader to the fact that the reasons for breakdown of the study do not constitute controllable variables and linear causes, but a multitude of mutually shaping contributory factors.

It was argued that within ERIP, the fact that the study was always someone else's responsibility meant that no-one had to attend to the study with rigour and seriousness, nor was anyone held accountable for how the research proceeded. The factors of responsibility and accountability which were expressed as long-standing NGO principles in chapter three, are therefore regarded as two that, had they been implemented, could have facilitated rather than hindered the research process.

Interestingly, one of the respondents argued that he did not know to what extent the study was ever accepted by the organisation. Implicit in the interviewee's comment is that there might not in fact have been anything which broke down, but that there were intentions which could not have been achieved in the first place since the study did not ever start; that the failure of the case was not about something ending, but rather about something which had not yet happened or not been allowed to happen. This raises again the issue of a lack of consensus about the scope of the study and also the problem of terminology. For instance, the respondent might have preferred the terms 'circumvention of the study' to 'breakdown' which was a term selected and imposed on the proceedings by the researcher. The term 'breakdown' clearly reflects the researcher's opinion that the study had been on track and that it came off the rails. It appears that the researcher's construction of reality, even though being mediated to participants, was at some level dominant. But this is not a cut and dried issue. While the

researcher wielded power in instigating the research and planning its direction at an abstract level, her attempts to carry out the investigation were frustrated by the organisation. Thus at another level, individuals within ERIP had the power to control and curtail the research process.

The view that the breakdown occurred as a result of the differences in perception and understanding between ERIP and the researcher as to the intentions and expectations of the research was certainly not uncommon. When examined, it moves beyond just a lack of clarity around scope and focus of the research. It includes the problematic area of communications, and even beyond that, by using terms like 'perception', 'intentions', 'expectations' and 'understanding', suggests that personal paradigms and styles influenced the research. This conjecture reinforces the notions of ERIP as a heterogeneous entity in the research process as well as the views that reality is not an absolute but is constructed variously by different people. Thus the research process and the study were never blue-prints which could simply be implemented as in a vacuum. They comprised and had to be made up by individual researchers and participants who determined the measure of success with which they were carried out. It is not untrue, for instance, that there was a collective decision by the research parties to be reflexive in the research and to undertake a modified investigation. Similarly, it is possible that some participants in the research process were sufficiently opposed to the research to short-circuit its implementation. There is no suggestion here of conspiracy theories, merely an exploration of probabilities.

The above proposition is made in keeping with interviewee responses that different persons have different styles and also bring to situations their

personal histories, agendas and paradigms. The researcher clearly falls into this categorisation as well. Two of the respondents noted that the modified investigation had concerned itself more with process and less with persons. They felt that the study had not probed sufficiently the extent to which people, their personalities and their agendas had shaped the course of the investigation. While it is virtually impossible to pinpoint or substantiate claims that certain players may not have wished the study to proceed, naturalistic inquiry permits and even encourages the incorporation of tacit in addition to propositional knowledge (cf chapter four). The rationale for this is the fact that "much of the interaction between investigator and respondent or object occurs at this level" of intuition and experience and because tacit knowledge "mirrors more fairly and accurately the value patterns of the investigator" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 40). On this basis, the proposition that some players may not have been in favour of the study because it posed a threat to their power base within, or the status quo of, the organisation becomes tenable.

A final incident in this category which relates to that of time-frame is the suggestion that the breakdown occurred partially because the study had not fed anything other than progress reports back to the organisation. In other words, ERIP staff were contributing to a process, but growing impatient about the returns and the lack thereof. Participants felt that they needed something out of the research to justify their inputs and investments. In the words of one of the respondents: "ERIP's appetite had been whetted, but they had not been served the meal". The research relationship had not, at the time of breakdown, produced any of the benefits that it had promised or suggested. This 'frustration' or 'impatience' factor no doubt contributed to

general disappointment with the study.

5.3.5.4 Positive aspects of the research process

Even though interviewees were generally disappointed that the study was not salvaged so that it could produce much sought after findings, they were pleased with the route of a modified investigation as this was seen as a 'natural' as opposed to an 'orchestrated' way for the study to proceed. Respondents felt that the modified investigation had been particularly useful in that it allowed participants to unravel the problems incurred in the interactive process. The experience of investigating the breakdown in the study had also caused ERIP to consider the various issues involved in interactions of a research related nature such as the need for and the contents of research contracts. The modified investigation had further prompted the organisation to consider the relationship between ERIP's departments, particularly the Resource and the Training Departments which had been estranged and working separately rather than cooperatively or compatibly. The breakdown then had seemingly resulted in a growth experience for the organisation. However, some of the interviewees noted that the links between the research 'crisis' and the subsequent learning curve within the organisation, were not necessarily always made by staff.

Another positive feature remarked on was that of the personal face-to-face communications which sometimes occurred in the course of the study. It was felt that these engagements allowed the research parties to discuss the study in depth, generating much debate which was enriching for the individuals concerned.

5.3.6 Final comments on the ERIP case

The primary contribution of the ERIP case to this study has been the investigation into the politics of research processes. The case has shown that the terrain of interaction between researchers and 'researched' is highly unstable and potentially fraught with difficulty. The modified investigation has revealed many problem areas in case study research. The findings have confirmed that there is a myriad of issues and factors which contribute to research outcomes. It has provided evidence that, within the parameters of a research project, the negotiation of needs and requests by concerned parties is of primary importance in securing fluid, productive working relations.

While the study of ERIP, because of its particular history, has been unable to contribute significantly to a discussion of the scope and nature of interactive information work, it presents an interesting analogy with interactions involved in information transactions. It is suggested that the nature of the interconnection between the researcher and the ERIP case might even mimic the kinds of relations at play between NGOs and their users. In this respect, the ERIP case in contrast to the ILRIG case has demonstrated how the mediation of requests and information can go awry. It is in this regard that issues in the case parallel some of the primary concerns of this investigation, viz. those of the mediation of information and the interface between information users and providers. It is proposed that the investigated case offers the opportunity to reflect on difficulties in information interchanges.

To illustrate more concretely the congruence between the ERIP case and the

context of information interactions, the following factors specific to the case are provided:

an information interview and a needs assessment were never successfully conducted in the unfolding ERIP investigation;

there were problems with both the mediation and the interpretation of the research request;

there were stumbling blocks in the response or among the respondents to the research proposal;

both parties assumed that their circumstances, needs, perceptions and approaches were agreeable or clearly stated.

Admittedly, most of these are among the more technical incidents cited in breakdown of the ERIP investigation. The more nuanced factors such as conflicting interests and personalities are clearly elements which might constitute part of an information interaction.

While it is true that some of the initial research intention could have been salvaged and some form of user survey conducted, this would not have revealed the underlying tensions in the research process as clearly as has been shown and might even have concealed them for the sake of reporting a 'successful' case.

It seems then that a fundamental concern in the interaction of parties, or in systems theory idiom, between different entities or components in a system, is the question of interface. The circumstances in which incumbents meet and who they are will determine to large extent whether or not they are able

to collaborate. It will also determine the nature of their partnership. An interesting lesson in the ERIP experience is that it is not always ideal to shy away from conflict and contradiction. It is sometimes necessary to engage with these forces in order to arrive at a deeper understanding not only of a situation, but how to move forward from a particular point, experience or situation, and indeed, how to transform an environment.

5.4 Concluding remarks on the interpretation of the case studies

The ILRIG and ERIP cases have demonstrated the uniqueness of case study investigation. Their contrast has made evident the particularity of case study research and the extent to which it is a 'science of the singular'. Nonetheless, it has been possible to draw similarities and commonalities between the studies of the two cases beyond their organisational similarities as NGOs. Both cases have demonstrated, in completely different ways, the centrality of the issue of interface in information exchanges between parties. They have alerted to the significance of the interface both in terms of the roles assumed by parties and the mechanisms used to improve interaction between them.

The following chapter, by way of recommendations, indicates conclusions from the empirical component which are sometimes common and sometimes particular to each case.

Chapter Six

Recommendations and conclusions

This thesis has been concerned with the emergence and operations of two NGOs. While one of these cases resulted in failure vis-a-vis the primary intention of the investigation, analysis of the other has shown in detail the way in which the organisation interacts with its users. A number of issues have come to surface in both cases, and it is the purpose of this chapter to consider these by way of conclusion to the study. The issues have been categorised as follows:

those relating to the research process; and

those having to do with the interaction between services and users of those services.

Each set of issues is dealt with in some detail below. The sequence in which issues are discussed stems from the fact that those relating to the research process lead into a discussion of issues regarding the interaction between services and their users. Where possible and appropriate, recommendations which are grounded in the research findings are made.

Prior to a discussion of these conclusions, it should be noted that the case studies reinforced certain theoretical underpinnings of the research and that their practices can, in fact, be framed by the sociology of information debate. Firstly, an investigation of the information work carried out by ILRIG showed that information is situationally defined and assumes significance in relation to need (cf section 2.2.3). The research showed that users wanted

particular information to support their need and furthermore wanted it mediated in ways which were empowering (cf section 3.2.4). This confirms Dervin's proposition that information is not "objective" - a view espoused by normative researchers - but that information assumes value in a given context (1977). The case studies also showed that information is crucial to user groups not only so that they can challenge a dominant ideology but also so that they can produce and present their own world-view. The ILRIG case showed that respondents required access to the information ILRIG could bring them, and required skills to interpret and use the information in order to produce knowledge about their situations. It further reinforces the argument made in chapter two that contrary to common expectation that librarians ought to be apolitical and neutral (Hall, 1986: 215), in the context of the politicisation of information, information workers have to assume an activist role. Another issue validated by the case research is the argument that the delivery of appropriate information has to occur in ways which are sensitive to the contexts and the experiences of users. As was argued in the previous chapter, users of politically focused information services are concerned with the power relation that exists between information services and mass organisations and argue that the former have to be simultaneously proactive in playing an advocacy role, and empowering by building self-sufficiency among their constituencies of users. In this respect, the British and American community information services referred to in Chapter Two (cf p 33), while similar to the South African cases investigated, are notably different from South African NGOs in their reluctance to perform an `activist' role in relation to issues of social development. Kempson's argument (1986; 1990) that information services have to play a direct and active role in empowering people to participate in the development of

society is borne out in the work of ERIP and ILRIG. These NGOs have attempted through the employment of interactive learning methodologies such as jointly coordinated group workshops, to transmit to users information which they could use to address their problems, and furthermore to assist user constituencies with devising strategies to overcome their problems. The problems of facilitator bias, knowledge power relations and political domination as discussed in chapter three which this interaction between information services and users suggests, were indeed uncovered and problematised in the case studies. This illustrated that political activism on the part of information services borders on interventionism which can in fact, contrary to expectation, be disempowering for user groups (cf sections 5.2.7.2 and 5.2.7.3).

In addressing these various issues, the case research has shown that appropriate information is a most strategic resource to people and organisations, access to and the use of which allows them to participate in the development of society and in shaping their lives. It is clear that in their goal to bring such information to their users, the mission of NGOs discussed in this research parallels that of community information services discussed in the British and American contexts (cf p 33). Both sets of organisations aim to improve information flow in society and to function as counter hegemonic forces (cf section 2.3.3) which recognise the developmental role of information and which are framed by a political drive to democratise societies. These organisations disseminate information to challenge and transform dominant, oppressive ideologies and, in so doing, identify a political as opposed to a neutral role for information, again reinforcing the

situationality of information as discussed in chapter two.

6.1 The research process

The research process has yielded interesting findings not only in relation to the issues being investigated which are dealt with below, but also in terms of the methodological approach adopted for the investigation. Many of the recommendations noted here are pertinent to both case studies although it is apparent where this is not so. As will become evident in the ensuing discussion, the various components of this sub-section are inter-related precisely due to the holistic nature of illuminative and responsive evaluation.

6.1.1 The importance of contracts and negotiation procedures

Both ILRIG and ERIP retrospectively argued on the basis of the drawn out nature of the investigations into their organisations, that contracts which document the purpose and the terms of studies involving organisations should be drafted. It is felt that such documents would commit both the researcher and the cases being investigated to particular agreements and would in fact oblige these parties to consider the nature of their arrangements more carefully. Matters which could be clarified include those regarding a time-frame for the study as well as the methods and regularity of reporting. However, it is acknowledged that by virtue of the nature of illuminative and responsive evaluation, while contracts could provide guidelines and terms of reference for an investigation, they cannot constitute blue-prints since certain issues may have to be revisited and renegotiated.

It became apparent in the course of both investigations that there were a number of issues which required rigourous and repeated debate and reconsideration. These included matters regarding the purpose of the investigation, the ways in which parts of the study could be used and adapted for different audiences, and the style of reporting during the study. Not only regular contact between the researcher and the organisations is required, but the special space in which parties could revisit issues and redesign aspects of the research contract is desirable. However, it is clear that this kind of open-endedness in the research process could result in a constant re-consideration of agreements and a lack of confidence in the research brief. It is true that the contract should provide both the investigator and the research participants a sense of security in their mission. Therefore a balance has to be sought between using the contract as a mechanism which guides the research process while at the same time allowing either/any research party the space to raise issues which require further address in the course of the investigation. This form of reflexivity is necessary to ensure that different parties consent to the research plan.

It is possible that in the course of negotiation, different parties (especially where there is more than one stakeholder) might not always agree on issues. The negotiation process should for this reason be seen as an ongoing opportunity to build greater consensus between research players rather than as a mechanism for participants simply to reach agreement on issues. While negotiation was not exercised sufficiently during the ILRIG and ERIP investigations, the absence of the mechanism became apparent more especially in the latter case, but only through use of the reflexive method which allowed for an investigation of why, in fact, the study deviated from

its original course. It is abundantly clear that in this case, more especially, more rigourous employment of the negotiating tool might have taken the study in a different direction, and might possibly have identified latent problems earlier on in the investigation.

6.1.2 Reporting

The importance of feeding back to the research parties the findings continuously generated through the unfolding research process is evident from the cases studied. If a study is to be truly responsive, it must necessarily involve the organisations being researched in the process of reflexivity. In other words, participants should be able to respond to and interact with various issues which the research illuminates throughout the course of the investigation. Implicit in the argument emphasising reflexivity in the research process, is the call for the process to be illuminative and to highlight and uncover factors and variables impacting on or affected by the investigation. But much as the illuminating character of the study is imperative, so too is the need to present findings back to participants.

By using reporting to feed back to the research parties findings which emanate from the investigation, the researcher is attempting to democratise the research process and to ensure that respondents can use and act upon findings, as well as steer the course of the research. Thus through reporting there is an attempt to break down the knowledge-power relation between the researcher and the researched. Immediate problems which relate to using the mechanism of reporting findings in this way is that the reports themselves are constructions which are produced by the researcher. Therefore while the reports allow the research parties access to information

and an opportunity to re-interpret findings and even to re-direct the research process, the act of reporting does beckon the question: who has the ultimate authority to present different interpretations? In other words, who has ownership of the research process, the researcher and author of reports, or the research parties as a collective? This issue came to bear in the ILRIG case where it was agreed that the researcher had authorial licence in the production of reports and the thesis, but that the organisation should have an opportunity to respond, not only to the various intermittent reports emanating from the investigation, but also to the final academic product, viz. the thesis. The research parties agreed that this option was one which would allow different voices involved in the investigation an opportunity to be heard. At the same time it was agreed that in terms of the thesis, just as there would be a final production, so too would there be a once-off comment by the organisation so as to avoid a to-and-fro dialogue between the parties and so that the research could reach closure. However, these reports of the research (the thesis and the appended response) do take the debate into the public domain entitling anyone who may so wish to take up any of the issues raised.

It appears then that while reports may be used as a strategic means of illuminating issues which emerge in the research, they may prompt the need for other structures or mechanisms to take forward the discussion of or action on these matters.

6.1.3 Improved dialogue between the research parties

It is evident from the above that reporting, negotiation and contracts are inter-related aspects or features of the research process. As has been

argued earlier, reporting procedures have to be negotiated, contracts have to be negotiated and sometimes revised, and the negotiation itself has to be documented and reported. It is clear then that what is most desirable between research parties is an ongoing dialogue which acknowledges, attempts to resolve, and sometimes accepts as a given the contradictory nature of the relationship between the researcher and the researched. This is not to argue that there is always a contradiction between these parties, nor that the researched organisation is a monolithic, homogeneous bloc. It is simply to assert that in the nature of the interactions such as those involved in the recorded cases, dialogue is essential for the research to unfold and be utilised.

In the calls by ILRIG and ERIP for greater interaction and dialogue between the researcher and the organisations, the researcher noted a parallel in the research methodology and the findings. As will be reiterated below, the ILRIG user surveys alerted to the need for increased and improved interaction between the organisation and its constituency. So too, methodologically, both cases expressed the need for more consistent contact and deliberation between the researcher and the organisations. The concepts of 'interactivity' and 'interface' have thus emerged at a number of levels in the course of this study.

6.1.4 Confidence in the researcher and the findings

The issue of the parties being investigated having confidence in the researcher's ability both to undertake the investigation and to report findings accurately was unavoidable in this study. In the ERIP case particularly, given the way in which the investigation unfolded, there were certainly underlying

tensions on the part of some organisational members regarding, not the researcher's integrity, but certainly her suitability to conduct the initially designed study. While this problem did not arise in the ILRIG investigation, it is clearly one which requires attention and perhaps some answers lie in contrasting the cases. The fundamental difference between the two organisations in their dealings with the researcher was that the latter had been in ILRIG's employ for a significant period of time. This suggests that the organisation's familiarity not only with the credentials of a researcher, but with his/her 'proven worth' is advantageous. In instances where the investigator is a complete unknown (as is most often the case with research consultants), it would seem helpful for him/her to present his/herself to a panel of organisational interviewees so that credentials are not only communicated in paper form, but a sense of the person gained through human interaction.

With regard to the validation of findings, this appeared a reasonably unproblematic area in both cases, most likely due to the care taken by the researcher to verify research information gathered. Thus the validation of information through member checks and triangulation gave not only the researcher, but also those participating in the research, a sense of confidence in the information presented through the research. It appears that these mechanisms went some way towards 'democratising' the research process in that organisations were not only relying on the interpretations of the researcher, but were able to draw their own conclusions from the findings by having direct access to 'original' records such as interview transcripts. In fact, in the ILRIG case, the organisation's ability to act somewhat independently on the findings from the user surveys

by taking matters up directly with users interviewed, meant that they were not reliant on the researcher as a conduit. This measure of autonomy which ILRIG took up - and which was agreed to by research parties - lessened the knowledge-power relation which usually weighs in the researcher's favour. This act through which ILRIG was given direct leverage in the research process improved the organisation's confidence in the process, the researcher and the findings since the organisation became directly involved in the generation of the latter.

Through using validation techniques, the researcher also ensures that the information gathered is confirmable and in this way diminishes concerns with researcher subjectivity. Furthermore, all research findings, including conflicting findings are reported in the spirit of illuminating rather than attempting to resolve contradictions emanating from the investigation. Thus there is a concern to declare findings credible lest the bases on which the arguments rest are questioned. In this regard, the investigator's task is to:

> carry out the inquiry in such a way that the probability that the findings will be found to be credible is enhanced, and ... to demonstrate the credibility of the findings by having them approved by the constructors of the multiple realities being studied (Lincoln & Guba, 1985: 296).

In this way there is greater confidence in the investigation; and the researcher through his/her efforts ensures that readers will pay attention to a study and regard it credible.

6.2 The concept of interactivity

As noted earlier, the concept of interaction or dialogue or improved interface has been central to this investigation which has concerned itself with:

the appropriateness of ILRIG and ERIP's 'current' services in relation to user needs; and

the ways in which the organisations identify user needs and the extent to which they address these

Consideration of these objectives through the case studies has led to the emergence of a number of issues. These have been selected by the researcher in an attempt to problematise the nature of the relationship between organisations and their users in their efforts to render services appropriate. Among these are identification of:

the interaction between services and their users as operating within an 'information system';

the interface between mediators and users of information within this 'system'; and

the implications which systems theory has for certain of its constituent elements, viz. information providers and information users.

Before consideration of these more theoretical issues which are grounded in the research, a summation of the findings will briefly be provided.

As has been detailed in chapter five, only the ILRIG case reached the stage of including user surveys. These surveys, in conjunction with interactive meetings held between ILRIG and the researcher, found that users responded variously to the question of the organisation's appropriateness in relation to their needs. Generally, there was a call for ILRIG to redefine its

focus in accordance with user needs. There was a corresponding comment that the organisation did not make sufficient effort to elicit from users their information requirements and that there was a need for ILRIG to relate far more directly with users around both their information needs and the interface between itself and its users.

The recommendations emerging from the ILRIG case relate to the interface between service organisations and users. Both the organisation and its users identified the need for consistent contact between themselves. It appears that service organisations can easily become dislocated from their users' collective needs if they operate on the basis of responding to a variety of requests being put to them, rather than in accordance with needs which are expressed by users through some kind of 'collective' forum. It is in this respect that it seems beneficial for service organisations to enter into some kind of structured interchange with their users. In the case of ILRIG, a 'user group' which could guide the interaction between the organisation and its constituency was suggested. Essentially, such a mechanism would improve the flow of communications between the concerned parties so that they are better able to jointly determine and, where necessary, decode user needs with a view to addressing these most appropriately. In this way users would also have better leverage (just as ILRIG had in the investigation) to direct the work of the organisation. Accountability, which is usually a concern of service organisations would in this way also be more easily facilitated.

It is clear that by attending to the interface between service organisations and users, issues of needs identification and corresponding responses are better mediated. The very existence of a consciously constructed interface commands parties to be more vigilant of their 'performance' and 'conduct'

in both formulating and responding to requests. The construction of a structure to mediate relations in fact generates greater consciousness about not only the nature of the relationship between the parties which is essentially one of the mediation of a service in relation to a need, but also of the fact that jointly the parties engage in the production of knowledge. In other words interaction between service organisations and their users (through information transactions and educational exchanges) leads to the generation of new knowledge by providing participants not necessarily with new information, but potentially with fresh perspectives on the information being discussed. These different learning experiences and environments allow participants to re-interpret their realities and to construct new meanings. The construction of mechanisms to facilitate these interactions will, most likely, enable 'interactors' to gain more from their collaboration. This is to say that dialogue or interaction, bearing in mind the reservations raised in chapter three, generally improves people's chances of learning. Thus the proposition is that an improved interface between service providers and users will enhance the dialogue between these groups with positive consequences for their potential to transform their knowledge bases, their conditions and their power.

To return to the abstract issues regarding the interface between service providers and users, it is suggested that the information system within which these groups interact is an open-system operating within a fluid ever-changing environment which both impacts on its operations and which is simultaneously influenced by it. The point behind proposing that information interactions occur in this way is to suggest that a range of variables influence these interactions and that information workers need to be aware

of these. Thus services have to interface with their users in the context of a much wider, constantly changing socio-political, economic, educational and cultural milieu. In order to be proactive and in order to interpret information requirements, information workers have to understand the subtle ways in which these variables possibly influence their users' perspectives. They require a consciousness of the sociology of information, of the formulation and existence of multiple realities so as to appreciate that there is not necessarily a correct answer or final answer to a query. They must understand that information work is as open-ended as the environment in which they operate and that the mediation of an information query might generate different information needs. Additionally, they have to operate in ways that will empower their users to become increasingly self-sufficient in understanding and formulating their queries more fully so that the barriers between users and services can be removed.

The creation of a culture of dialogue and interaction is regarded as among the primary means of building bridges of communication between services and users; bridges on which the traffic flows not only in two directions but at times chaotically within the larger environmental milieu so that information workers need to be aware of the entire web of interconnected relations found within a milieu in formulating responses to users' inquiries. The two-way communication flow allows users not only the channel through which to pose queries, but also the opportunity to feed into, transform and shape the information environment by depositing knowledge, suggesting changes to the service and directing services in ever-more appropriate ways.

It becomes clear then that the notion of 'users' in the dynamic information

system being proposed, is inadequate and inappropriate. Users do not only interface with a service by virtue of their requests put to that service. They become active participants in shaping and directing the course of that service and in some senses assume the role of directors or certainly actors in the making of a service. Similarly, the service providers are no longer simply providers of information, but plot and design an ever-changing space which attempts to mediate (most appropriately) the relevant information to those in need. This demands that our perception of what happens between the participants in an information system changes and that our language used to describe these transactions accordingly reflects these changes. Systems theory has democratised thinking in that key players in a system are understood to perform roles which are equally valued. Unfortunately, given the pace of change and the fact that new systems and ways of seeing and working are only currently taking effect, it will be a while before one hears of key informants and role players rather than users. And while the notion of participants more especially in educational and information settings is gaining acceptance, the primary notion of users - as long as there is a 'service' concept - will always be in vogue. It is virtually impossible to have a service without having users. Perhaps the challenge at this stage is not necessarily to reconfigure the notion of service which is much more fundamental, but to incorporate the other roles which users play within the systems paradigm. We need to ensure that the space is created for users to plot a directional role for systems, and then we need to recognise this role.

6.3 Conclusion

This study has attempted to contextualise its discussion of 'interactivity' between various partners (alternative services and users; researchers and

researched; and teachers and learners) within an understanding of how information impacts on individuals. The study has outlined a socio-political context in which to view information, proposing a sociological understanding of information. The rationale for this context-setting has been to ensure that there is depth of understanding of the environment in which service organisations operate as well as the subtleties of their interactions with their users. It has been suggested that one of the major defining characteristics which differentiate alternative from traditional library and information services is the interactive nature of their interface with their users. The recommendations and conclusions reached in this chapter are derived from the research undertaken. Every effort has been made throughout the study and again in this chapter, to indicate the inter-relation of a number of levels of the investigation, viz. the methodological approach adopted for the study, the relation between service organisations and users and on a micro-level, that between facilitators and learners. The analogies and parallels have generally revolved around the concepts of dialogue, interface and interactivity, all of which are concerned with collaboration, partnership and cooperation. These are concepts and values which are increasing in prominence at a time when a range of different groupings are converging to share experiences, resources and approaches which improve systems, environments and life generally. It is believed therefore that the ideas emanating from this investigation are synchronous with broader thinking in the socio-political, economic and cultural milieu in that there is a correlation between processes and findings of this investigation and patterns of development which are increasingly found in the new South Africa.

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APPENDIX 1A

Flat 1
126 Upper Queens Road
Walmer Estate
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ph: 47 1998

Dear ILRIG

17 March 1990

Re: Research proposal for study in Information Science
Duration of study: May 1990 - December 1991

After some discussion with people working in information centres I am interested in studying the methods of work of information centres in meeting the information needs of their users. In this regard I wish to study two such centres, viz. yourselves and ERIP.

I would be interested in considering ILRIG as one of the groups of study for the following reasons:

* I'm somewhat familiar with the workings of the group including both its various facets (publications, education, resources), and discussions regarding its orientation, direction and effectiveness in meeting its objectives.

* I find ILRIG interesting given the way in which its profile as an information centre has developed from an 'on-campus' grouping to one more closely aligned with its target user population - not only the physical departure from the campus site to Community House, but also its popularisation and increasing use by the labour movement specifically and the mass democratic movement generally.

* There is no doubt that ILRIG has a well-established information service in that it has sought to derive its direction from its user population thus constituting a legitimate service as opposed to one imposed upon its users - perhaps an issue to be considered more carefully in terms of its history and development. Nonetheless, such 'legitimacy' of service suggests that its lessons in information provision might pertain to other centres as well.

* I hope to have access to founder members of the group and to the present group more readily than I might to other groups, not only geographically but also because of my working history with ILRIG.

* Finally, it is this point concerning extrapolation of the study which seems to ILRIG a suitable, indeed a valuable case study with special regard for the resource aspect of the project: since many groups are considering computerisation of their information systems, other groups should be able to use the proposals which the study makes regarding improved methods of work.

My interest in ERIP stems from its orientation as an off-campus grouping initially and one whose history of repression highlights the point of information inaccessibility in South Africa. It too has an interesting evolution in terms of its concern with providing useful information to users in productive and accessible ways.

After an initial discussion with Richard, I would appreciate it if you could take time to consider the enclosed preliminary proposal as a further step in my seeking the go-ahead to evaluate ILRIG. If ILRIG is prepared to consider this proposal I would wish to meet with you and discuss the issue further. I am also available to clarify any questions you may have. Because f the urgency of my proposal being presented to the School of Librarianship - the scheduled date is the 28 march - I require an initial response. I belive that if the proposal is accepted, this will entail time and effort on the part of ILRIG, but that the study should highlight feasible options for improving the workings of the group.

I am presenting the same proposal to ERIP and hope for a favourable response by Friday 23 March for the latest. This would allow me to compile a more detailed proposal along the lines of that enclosed to be presented to the School of Librarianship on the 28 March. Both yourselves and ERIP would be given copies of this proposal which I would discuss with you in more detail.

I apologise for the time pressure which I am placing on you and hope that this will not mar what could be a productive relationship. Should you wish to meet with me in this week of the 19 March, please contact me.

I thank you for your time and look forward to working with you.

Yours in solidarity

Cathy-Mae Karelse

APPENDIX 1B

Flat 1
126 Upper Queens Road
Walmer Estate
7925
ph: 47 1998

Dear ERIP

17 March 1990

Re: Research proposal for study in Information Science
Duration of study: May 1990 - December 1991

After some discussion with people working in information centres I am interested in studying the methods of work of information centres in meeting the information needs of their users. In this regard I wish to study two such centres, viz. yourselves and ILRIG.

I would be interested in considering ERIP as one of the groups of study for the following reasons:

* ERIP is particularly interesting given its history of repression - an aspect which highlights the information inaccessibility problem in South Africa.

* It's style of work, i.e. the educational workshop method alongside the resource aspect of the project depict the dominant methods of work undertaken by information centres so that although this would be a case study which presumably isn't generalisable, the project's lessons and problems might well pertain to other groups.

* As in the case of ILRIG, ERIP seems to have grappled with its direction and sought to derive this from its users. This feature lends legitimacy to its service, again making the findings of the study pertinent to the workings of other groupings.

* ERIP appears committed to providing useful information to users in productive and accessible ways and it is these creative methods of work which are of primary concern in the study.

* While I am far less *au fait* with the workings of ERIP as opposed to ILRIG, I assume that there are many similarities in terms of direction. However, the somewhat different user population, makes the contrast of study potentially useful in that methods of work in reaching different audiences will be addressed through the study.

After a telephonic conversation with Nasieg on 9 March, I would appreciate it if you could take time to consider the enclosed preliminary proposal as a further step in my seeking the go-ahead to evaluate your project. If ERIP is prepared to consider this proposal I would wish to meet with you to discuss the issue further. I am also available to clarify any questions you may have.

Because of the urgency of my proposal being presented to the LIS department - the scheduled date is the 28 March - I require an initial response. I believe that if the proposal is accepted, this will entail time and effort on the part of ERIP, but that the study should highlight feasible options for improving the workings of the group.

I am presenting the same proposal to ILRIG and hope for a favourable response by Friday 23 March for the latest. This would allow me to compile a more detailed proposal along the lines of that enclosed to be presented to the School of Librarianship on the 28 March. Both yourselves and ILRIG would be given copies of this proposal which I would discuss with you in more detail.

I apologise for the time pressure which I am placing on you and hope that this will not mar what could be a productive relationship. Should you wish to meet with me in this week of the 19 March, please contact me.

I thank you for your time and look forward to working with you.

Yours in solidarity

Cathy-Mae Karelse

1) The conceptual component
would deal with the problem of information flow and provision in South Africa. This problem has two fundamental features: that of information control by the state on the one hand, and that of resistance and reaction to efforts at control on the other. It would thus seek to understand motives behind both disempowerment and empowerment and would need to address and clarify numerous aspects of this problem such as the centrality of information to the maintenance of and struggle for power.

Since this study is concerned with the development of information services appropriate to the needs of the users they service, it is felt that this component should deal with the nature and work of information services in some depth in order to: (a)develop a notion of the constitution and nature of appropriate information services necessary in the South African context, and (b)locate the case studies in this context, and apply this conceptual analysis.

2) The empirical component
will seek to understand how information services have worked against information control and how they have inserted into mass struggle to generate change in South Africa. Their work will be viewed not only in terms of a 'politics of reaction' but will also be regarded in terms of how proactive these services have been. To arrive at such an understanding, the work of ILRIG and ERIP - two cases of information services - will be evaluated. While this component cannot quantitatively measure the impact that these services have had on mass struggle, this aspect of information service work is of underlying significance to the study and will be commented on both in the conceptual as well as the empirical components.

APPENDIX 3

EVALUATION STUDIES OF ILRIG AND ERIP
PROGRESS REPORT: 24 SEPTEMBER 1991

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to update you on my progress since registration in July this year and to outline proposals for the empirical component of my work. With regard to the latter, this report will partly provide the basis for discussion at our meeting on 27 September. The report is structured as follows: I've re-addressed the issue of the research problem and with it the aims and objectives of the evaluation; an approach to the evaluation is proposed and motivated for; and the way forward is briefly discussed and includes a proposed agenda for the coming meeting.

REDEFINING THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

I have spent the past two months reading around numerous approaches to evaluation research with the purpose of identifying one most suited to the intended case studies. Through this process the overall aims of my work have changed somewhat. Instead of simply understanding the context in which information services emerged and their contribution to the struggle for free access to information (cf Progress Report: 14 November 1990), I've expanded the scope of my work to include consideration of how information services could become most appropriate given the shift from reactive, anti-apartheid politics to proactive, developmental work. The modification of aims has occurred because I have related ideas emanating from readings and discussion to the contexts of my intended work and that of a changing South Africa.

AIMS 7 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Aims refer to those overall aims, goals, intentions of the study while objectives refer to its specific sub-aims or sub-goals.

As its general aims, the research seeks to:

(1) identify the reasons for the emergence of information services and role they played in bridging information gaps; and
(2) contribute towards the development of appropriate information services in a changing South Africa

The overall intention is to identify ways in which existing information services need to restructure and reform themselves to meet the challenges of change.

The specific objectives of the study are to evaluate:
* the appropriateness of the current service in relation to user needs;
* the ways in which ILRIG & ERIP identify user needs and the extent to which they address these;
* the structure, processes and procedures of the projects in carrying out their work;
* the methods of empowering users i.e. education, resource and

information provision;
* the ways in which the projects evaluate themselves.

EVALUATION APPROACH

In order to carry out the study towards realising the objectives, we need clarity and agreement on how to approach the evaluation. I am aware that this discussion does, at times, become technical, but I've dealt with the evaluation approach in some depth so that you are provided with the information about my orientation and are in a position to comment on it.

In outlining my proposed approach, viz. that of responsive evaluation and case study research, I try to identify guiding principles to inform the basis of our working relationship.

All evaluations aim to judge the worth (extrinsic property) and merit (intrinsic property) of objects they're evaluating. A project's worth relates to the extent of need for the service and its merit to the excellence of its service.

There are numerous approaches to evaluation research. Those of relevance to the intended work include:
1. improvement-oriented evaluation;
2. client-centred or responsive evaluation; and
3. illuminative evaluation.

Other well-known approaches which I've rejected for reasons listed below, include:
1. the objectivist-based approach
   This is unsuitable because we are not only concerned with whether ILRIG and ERIP have attained their objectives and goals, but with the very processes, practices and procedures f firstly identifying and secondly realising these.

2. the consumerist-based approach
   The intention of such studies is to suggest a project that might best service users. The intended study does not regard comparison in this light as useful because of the unique nature of information services and their intentions.

Responsive, illuminative evaluation
This particular evaluation will be conducted within the illuminative, responsive paradigm. Responsive evaluation aims to reflect the various interpretations that people (including staff and users) have of a project. It does not judge in terms of absolute "goodness" or "badness" but highlights a project's strengths and weaknesses.

Responsive evaluation or evaluation as portrayal is Robert Stakes' version of illuminative evaluation - an approach espoused by Parlett and Hamilton. These modes of evaluation emerged as alternatives to traditional approaches which sought numerical, quantifiable findings. The theorists of illuminative/responsive/holistic evaluation suggest that evaluations be:
- responsive to the needs and perspectives of differing audiences;
- illuminative of the complex organisational, teaching and learning

processes at issue;
- relevant to public and professional decisions forthcoming; and
- reported in language which is accessible to their audiences.

Thus the primary concern of illuminative evaluation is with describing and interpreting rather than with measuring and predicting. It seeks to illuminate and explain the conditions of projects as a whole: their rationale, evolution, operations, achievements and difficulties rather than simply assessing them without explaining their conditions. In keeping with these principles, responsive evaluation portrays a project's activities, responds to what users/audiences want from the evaluation, and presents different value-perspectives of a project. Responsive evaluation is highly suited to individual studies and deals with these through case study research. I discuss this below after considering the usefulness of improvement-oriented evaluation for this study.

The ways in which responsive evaluation is conducted is based on the stages of illuminative evaluation:
1. the observation phase, in which the full range of variables affecting the outcome of the project are investigated;
2. the inquiry stage, in which the emphasis changes from being knowledgeable (the observation phase) to the focusing and directing of questions in a coherent relaxed fashion so that a systematic and selective list of important aspects of the project in its context is further understood;
3. the explanation stage, in which general principles underlying the organisation of the project are brought to the light of day and in which patterns of case and effect within its operations are delineated.

To demonstrate how these stages inter-relate and hold together, Stake proposes an evaluation clock which can be seen in Appendix 1. The approach involves techniques such as interview, observation, questionnaires, searching of documentary and background sources, meetings with project staff, all f which were dealt with in the initial 'Research Proposal'.

Improvement-oriented evaluation
Improvement-oriented evaluation, advocated by Stufflebeam does not, strictly speaking, fall into the evaluation by illumination bracket. Whereas responsive evaluation aims to develop a comprehensive view of a project, Stufflebeam's approach addresses on the most important information needs of its relevant audiences. While both approaches are geared towards decision making, the latter is not as holistic as the former. Nonetheless, the approaches are certainly complementary and Stufflebeam suggests a very practical approach to evaluating projects which is appropriate to aspects of my work. He calls his model for project evaluation CIPP, n acronym for CONTEXT, INPUT, PROCESS AND PRODUCT evaluation. After explaining a bit about the model, its suitability to the intended case studies will become apparent.

Stufflebeam believes that a project's goals, design, implementation and impact are crucial aspects that need to be evaluated. Accordingly, he proposes CIPP as a framework within which to work. It outlines different types of evaluation to serve particular purposes:

context evaluation to help develop goals
input evaluation to help shape proposals
process evaluation to guide implementation
product evaluation to serve recycling decisions

For further information about CIPP refer to Appendix 2 which considers the different types of evaluations with regard to their objectives, methods and relation to decision making in a project's developmental process. It will become clear from he Appendix that CIPP is very structured. This has the advantage of providing a framework to guide the evaluation process, but the disadvantage of being restrictive in setting very clear terms and boundaries, thus discouraging responsiveness and changes in the evaluation plan.

My reason for discussing the approach at some length is because it is possible to use only one aspect of CIPP, e.g. only input evaluation or any combination of the evaluation types. context evaluation would be particularly useful to the study in providing the following kind of information:

what needs (were) are addressed, how pervasive and important (were) are they, and to what extent (were) are the project's objectives reflective of assessed needs?

Case study research

Case study is a means of facilitating responsive evaluation of a project. The treatment of ILRIG and ERIP as 'cases' of information services would allow me to address the objectives listed above and, hopefully, to realise the study's aims. The selection of ILRIG and ERIP as 'representative cases' of information services was motivated in an earlier letter to you (cf correspondence of 17 March 1990). Such selection does not undermine the uniqueness of each case, not the possibility to generalise from the cases or the 'instances' studied, to the class (of information services) these cases represent. Therefore, while differences between ILRIG and ERIP will emerge throughout the evaluation studies because of the uniqueness of each (even though the same techniques are used and the same objectives apply), the findings which will probably uncover organisational practices that can be modified or built on to improve the services provided, should be generalisable and useful to other information services.

In terms of our working relationship - that between myself as evaluator and you the projects - there are three aspects of the case study we need to consider, viz. (1)circumstances of the case; (2)the conduct of the study; and (3)the consequences of the research. Some aspects of these considerations were discussed at our initial meeting on 17 September 1990. I would like to document these discussions and make further proposals that we can discuss and refer to as required.

(1) Circumstances of the case

There have been a series of contacts/meetings/discussions between us about the evaluation study. Basically I, in my capacity as a student research/evaluator, approached you - ILRIG and ERIP - to do evaluation studies of your projects. Agreement and the go-ahead received from you has been based on correspondence and discussions.

The issues around which we reached agreement at an initial meeting (17

September 1990) are:

- all parties, i.e. myself and you ILRIG and ERIP are committed to the evaluation on condition that it benefits the projects;
- with regard to circulation of findings, there was general agreement that whatever is disclosed or found through the evaluation research should be included in the thesis. However, 'sensitive' issues should be checked with the projects before inclusion. It was also felt that written reports should be scanned by the projects so that they could have the opportunity to (a)check that their comments are accurately represented, and (b)censor 'sensitive' information. This does not include licence by the projects to exclude negative judgements or criticism of their work;
- with regard to access to information, the projects' documentation would be made available to me without hesitation;
- you - the projects - and I can differ with each other, but your voice must be heard in the final write up, possibly through annexures to the thesis.

(2) The conduct of the study

The methods and techniques used in the study will be made clear. Where questions of reliability of information arise, the information should be validated before inclusion in the final write-up. Furthermore, the "overheard should be distinguished from hearsay, primary evidence from secondary, description from interpretation, verbatim accounts from summaries" (Simon, 1980: 55).

Reporting will be central to the study. The practice of reporting through written documents, meetings and discussions with the projects is seen as the prime means through which the study will be made useful and checked for relevance.

(3) The consequence of the research

The purpose of the study is to be useful and destructive in any way.

I hope that the evaluation will produce findings which can be used to motivate for the importance and continued work of the projects to funders.

It is also the intention of the study to produce findings that will be useful to the projects specifically in improving their services and service groups generally.

THE WAY FORWARD

I would like to briefly propose how I see things moving from here so that we have a sense of direction.

In terms of Stake's evaluation clock, I see myself at 12 bells, i.e. moving in, gaining a sense of the projects, orientating myself. To some extent, we've discussed and defined the purposes of the evaluation, but these should be reassessed for accuracy and appropriateness. While I've already outlined the aims and objectives of the evaluation, it would be useful to pose issues/research questions for consideration. These can be discussed and altered so that we arrive at a mutual understanding of what the evaluation aims to achieve.

The information that will be sought through the study should facilitate an understanding of the projects':

- orientation and history;
- current work and service provided in relation to user needs;
- organisational structure, goals and strategies;
- internal processes and procedures;
- methods of work in empowering users;
- evaluative methods.

I know that the plan seems vague and the future looks unpromising, but once the fieldwork begins, the series of events that constitute the actual evaluation will be set in motion.

Finally, I wish to propose the following as points for discussion at our coming meeting:

1. The delay in the study - we're about 3 months behind schedule
2. Commitment to the study
3. Clarity about the purpose, aims and objectives of the study which goes together with re-orienting it, if so desired
4. Case study considerations
5. Comments regarding the evaluation approach
6. Getting on with it

Please change, delete, add!

APPENDIX 4

Flat 1
126 Upper Queens Rd
WALMER ESTATE
7925
ph: 47 1998

13 July 1990

Dear ILRIG and ERIP

Planning for evaluation studies of the ILRIG and ERIP projects

Earlier this year, I approached you about doing a study of your work. After meeting with your projects in March and receiving permission to make applications to the university to formalise the study, I would like to update you on progress regarding it.

In April the Higher Degrees Committee accepted my research proposal - the same proposal was given to you in June. While the proposal outlines the intentions of the study, it does not provide any timetable according to which the work will be done, mainly because such a schedule has to be worked out in consultation with you.

To account for the past two months, I have spent this time gather ing material to assist with contextualisation of the study and preparing for a workshop presentation on "The politics of information in South Africa" - a workshop which assisted with getting the study off the ground.

However, in order to make any further progress with the study, I would need to request a meeting with you so as to discuss an agreeable timetable and procedure for the study. It is also clear that at some stage I would need to meet with the two projects jointly so that we could clarify mutual and possibly conflicting objectives of the evaluation studies.

With regards to the research, there are issues which will have to be ironed out and ensured in an ongoing way throughout the course of the study, e.g. the way in which various aspects of the work will be made useful tot he respective projects. For an initial meeting though, I hope that the research proposal will provide sufficient basis upon which to discuss the content of the proposed approach to the study. For this first meeting, I would like to propose the following agenda which you, of course, could change:

1) A general discussion of the research proposal:
   - does it cover areas in need of evaluation?
   - are there research areas which could be deleted?
   - are there additional research questions that could be included in the study?

2) Scheduling a joint meeting with ILRIG and ERIP

3) The issue of accountability
   This issue, while I would not like to exaggerate its relevance, has

bearing in the sense that I obviously need to be using the energy and time of the projects to an end that would benefit the projects. Also, I cannot misrepresent the views and records of the project. One option to resolve this problem is to enter into a contractual agreement to ensure that ILRIG and ERIP get as much out of the research as invest in it, and to ensure accuracy of the report.

4) The proposed approach to the research
Beside for agreeing on the way of doing evaluation, we need to design an evaluation programme. This clearly cannot be done at an initial meeting, and will probably take shape while the actual work is being done. It is an issue though which will require a special meeting early on in the study.

5) A calender to guide the research work
The duration of the study will be about 2 years. The following is feasible from my side, but would depend on ILRIG and ERIP work schedules. I've identified four stages to the study:

(a) Plotting the emergence of the projects historically.
This will involve both book work and the interviewing of founder members

(b) Designing an evaluation programme.
Here, I would approach the projects with a concrete proposal of a programme which we could amend. Again, such a proposal would require book work and the actual methodological approach to the research would require justification and have to be motivated for.

(c) Undertaking the evaluation study.
This fieldwork component would probably require a great deal of cooperation and time from the projects both to gain the relevant material/data and to feed results back into the projects.

(d) Compiling the final report.
At present this stage seems too distant to detail.

All of these stages could include feedback reports and discussions, but these would probably prove most important in the third and fourth stages. While I think these reports are very important in using the research to benefit the projects, I am aware that they should not collapse into mere editing sessions for the thesis. In other words I think the technique should be used as long as it remains productive to the projects and useful for the research.

With regards to the calender, I've considered spending the rest of this year working on the (a) and (b) components, i.e. July - December 1990 on sections (a) and (b).
I will only be able to resume work in mid-May next year, and propose to spend June to December doing intensive fieldwork, i.e. June - December 1991 on section (c).
January - June 1992 would be spent writing up the research findings.

I hope to meet with each of the projects in early August. I am available for meetings on any morning of the week.

Should you decide that it would be more useful to meet with each other before meeting with me or that we should meet at the same time, please let me know so that I can prepare for a joint meeting. This approach might prove more useful so that we can identify a common agenda from the outset.

I hope that this letter serves to clarify issues until we meet and look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you for your time
Regards

Cathy-Mae Karelse

APPENDIX 5

ILRIG USER SURVEY

INTERIM REPORT NO. 1

10 June 1992

Cathy-Mae Karelse

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION
2. THE CONTEXT OF USER COMMENTS
3. USER COMMENTS ON ILRIG'S SERVICE
4. OBSERVATIONS MADE THROUGH THE INTERVIEWS
5. USING THIS REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

On 12 May 1992, I started a survey of ILRIG users. This report is based on the findings of 6 of the 8 intended user interviews. The interview respondents were:

John Mawby from SAMWU
Bobby Mjinga and Vanessa from NUM
Martin Jansen from CWIU
Ashley Anderson from Hout Bay Resource Centre
Niel Newman from SACHWU
Nic Henwood from TAGWU

These people were not approched through their official organisational channels as Richard had suggested, because the first few interviewees said that they were prepared to meet with me once they'd seen the 'interview packs' - these contained the Interview Guiding Questions plus letters from ILRIG and myself motivating for the interviews. It seemed that approaching the EDCOMS, REDCOMS and Branch Executive Committees would have delayed the meetings quite considerably.

To remind you about the content of the interviews, please find the Guiding Questions attached (App 1). 3 of the 6 interviews are taped providing a verbatim account of them. ILRIG will have access to the interview transcripts in about 2 weeks time once they've been okayed by respondents.

The interviews generally went well, the participants were very responsive and a number of them suggested that the survey was quite useful in that it made them think about ILRIG, their organisations and the nature of relations between the two. They further suggested that the survey could set a process of discussions in motion so that the problem of ILRIG's role with regard to worker education becomes more rigourously debated.
The interviews were particularly useful in that respondents made concrete proposals about ways in which ILRIG could improve its service. These are written into the 3rd part of this report.

Interviews seldom strictly follow the course initially designed. Most respondents tended to concentrate on Sections B, C & D of the Guiding Questions and found that they'd gone a long way towards answering Section E through these earlier inputs.

What became very clear to me through the course of the interviews, is that interviewer bias i.e. my subjectivity crept into them. For example, I placed greater emphasis on certain of the issues that respondents raised because they were new and different to others which repeated what previous respondents had said. I don't believe that this

has been negative and would argue that subjectivity can be used to enhance user inputs and provide ILRIG with greater insight into user experience. However, should ILRIG stress that each question be awarded equal time rather than the depth of some at the expence of others, we can discuss this for future interviews. I am also raising this issue because ILRIG should be confident about my motives and performance as an interviewer.

2. THE CONTEXT OF USER COMMENTS

All respondents made their comments in the spirit of their respect for ILRIG and the work it does. All criticisms were constructive and intended to improve ILRIG's service. The respondents strongly favoured ILRIG's continued existence and viewed their contributions as helping to shape ILRIG's service. I think this point is important so that ILRIG does not feel defensive about the criticisms raised but is able to use and build on them to develop its service.

3. USER COMMENTS ON ILRIG SERVICE

Rather than reporting back direct responses to questions, I've identified the following areas as the main issues about which respondents spoke:

a) ILRIG's FOCUS AND AUDIENCE
b) USER EDUCATION NEEDS
c) ILRIG's APPROACH TO EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT
d) PROACTIVITY & "SUSSING OUT" USER NEEDS
e) THE ISSUE OF ACCOUNTABILITY
f) ILRIG's FUTURE ROLE

Each of these areas will be dealt with and the interview findings included in their appropriate sections. You'll notice that all the interview sections from the Guiding Questions generally correspond to the above listing. The reason for the change in section title or heading is that the above 6 areas present a translation of the the Interview Guiding Questions into sections/areas that capture actual user responses.

3.1 ILRIG's FOCUS AND AUDIENCE

Many respondents argued that ILRIG itself did not seem to have a clear vision of its role and what it could offer its users.
All respondents felt that ILRIG should "streamline its activities" and re-orientate itself towards its "internationalist niche". It was argued that ILRIG had diverted from this 'focus' by becoming quite general in its delivery of a range of services such as media training which is a skill not in keeping with its name. Respondents felt

that this 'expansion' of ILRIG's focus had come about because the project had been too accommodating of a wide range of requests and had been reluctant to turn people - especially regular users - away. None of the respondents undermined the usefulness of ILRIG's work in sharing their resources and skills through projects like the Media Training Forum, in fact in some instances media training formed a substantial part of ILRIG's work with users (as in the cases of Nedlac, and ISS). They argued however that by concentrating its efforts in this area, ILRIG was unable to invest time in other areas of work which would enhance its internationalist focus (see suggestion 1 below).

Mr I respondents suggested instead of this generalised service to all that ILRIG concentrate on developing its service to meet unions' international educational and information needs. 4 of the 6 participants felt that ILRIG should utilise their telecommunications infrastructure more effectively and provide unions with first-hand information on developments in their sectors internationally (see suggestion 2 below). One respondent suggested that ILRIG could model themselves on IUKIB which delivers such services to unions (admittedly in a different context and with a different history). Those respondents who are unionists felt that this service was particularly important for trade unions at this point given COSATU's presence at an international level, plus union affiliation to international umbrella structures. It was also argued that ILRIG's role of building an internationalist consciousness among SAn workers and breaking down a "SAn worker chauvinism" remains important and further highlights the usefulness of this suggested service.

One respondent strongly favoured a return to the "book-mode" above Workers' World, saying that ILRIG's books made a tremendous impact on workers. The same respondent felt that ILRIG should participate in the creation of a "subscriber consciousness" among workers so that the administrative burden of distribution was not placed on organisations other than ILRIG. Most respondents felt that Workers' World was not doing enough, that ILRIG invests a lot of resources in its production and that it requires further evaluation in terms of assessing its effectiveness in relation to production costs (including costs other than financial like time, expertise etc.). In keeping with these concerns, respondents felt that ILRIG is not maximising the resources invested in Workers' World. The work done for publication should be used in other aspects of ILRIG's service e.g. workshops dealing with some of the articles could be offered to unions.

A respondent also felt that in relation to user education needs (see 3.2 below), ILRIG should be spending more time providing research on international developments like the

Eastern European crisis and its bearing on the South African context. He noted that no other service is providing such information which is needed by unions.

5 of the 6 respondents were unionists all of whom argued quite clearly that ILRIG's targeted audience should be trade unions. They also assumed this in the way they answered questions. Without having interviewed the Khanya & SAYSTU students, it's difficult to pose any counter to this view other than to say that if ILRIG choses to target an audience like trade unions, the work it does with other groups like students should serve to strengthen its service to its targeted user group.

Suggestions:

1) It was suggested that ILRIG form part of a collective of service organisations which aims to rationalise services and training provided to mass-based organisations. ILRIG is already active in the Regional Development Forum and could possibly through this forum hand over to other more appropriately placed groups the area of media training.

2) The suggestion about the specific service around desseminating international news to unions could be followed up through INTERNET which ILRIG could access from UCT. A modem link-up to UCT from Community House would incur the cost of a local phone call to access international news. Please find an example of the kind of information that could be accessed in Appendix 2.

3.2 USER EDUCATION NEEDS

Users generally argued that their educational needs had in fact changed (or increased in volume and become more urgent) not only in relation to South African but also international conditions. Previously worker education needs were geared towards building the trade union and a working class consciousness. Now in addition to these needs, workers require skills to participate in political developments such as negotiations at both a political and economic level. Political decision making is moving so fast that unions and their base are being left behind in this process.

While respondents argued that there is currently a greater need for education and training around for example negotiations and policy formulation, they all felt that the long-standing needs to build organisation and a worker leadership are more urgent than ever. As one unionist put it, "We must remind ourselves where we come from, and where we are going to".

But unionists are also saying that they need more education and information around international issues and developments as discussed above, and it was here that they saw ILRIG having most active.

One respondent in particular felt that ILRIG should equip workers with communication skills. He felt that this was important so that workers could themselves start delivering the kind of services that ILRIG provides. This view is in keeping with those of others who felt that ILRIG should do more to empower workers with research skills and expose them to experiences other than those of an audience, e.g. workers should be encouraged to give inputs at workshops and should be assessed so that they could build on these experiences.

3.3 ILRIG's APPROACH TO EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT

Most of the respondents felt that ILRIG's style of working is very appropriate and suitable to their users. The project is able to move into a situation and conscientise workers by relating educational inputs to their experiences. ILRIG's methods and approach also suggest a strong respect for workers and organisations which make them "invaluable".

Respondents did suggest though that ILRIG should be more consistent in their provision of service. The notion of consistency relates to a various aspects of ILRIG's service. It relates to:

(i) the issue of 'proactive work' which is dealt with below.

(ii) the problem of follow up which unionists felt was lacking in ILRIG's interactions with them. The project's "ad hoc" approach to education means that ILRIG staff is seldom building on the work they do with users. The absence of a more rigourous method of evaluation of services rendered means that users are not being conscientised about methodology in the provision of services.

(iii) ILRIG s inefficiency in utilisation of its resources meaning that working hours are being lost and human resources being wasted because the organisation's activities have not been streamlined. Greater planning and 'vision' would mean that the various aspects of the organisation would hang together better, e.g. a course on 'Cases of worker control' would be written up in Workers' World, generate a pack, strengthen relations with users who would be invited to attend and get a report on the proceedings, etc.

All respondents pressed for a more "consistent, modularised, systematic" approach to education. This suggestion was made in the context of COSATU's education plan which may be made official and public this weekend, the 13 June 1992. Users

tell that this "new" approach to education would allow ILRIG to play a more useful role in building a worker leadership. The problem with ILRIG simply performing this role through its Worker College or COSATU Winter School work, is the fact that these projects are run outside of ILRIG and don't feed automatically into the organisation.

While respondents are not arguing that the one-off or ad hoc requests must be completely side-lined, they are saying that where such 'contracts' are entered into they should:

a) be drawn from ILRIG's other work and not require undue preparation;
b) build into themselves some form of evaluation which serves as a learning experience both for the union and ILRIG;
c) encourage a more structured, long-term relationship between the user and ILRIG.

Alongside this, respondents are arguing that a more consistent approach to educational work - whereby ILRIG plans 'modular' courses - allows the project to lay out a long-term plan (in consulation with COSATU, users and possibly non-users) upon which it can base its ad hoc workshops. Unionists say that if they could know about ILRIG's course schedule a year in advance, they should not encounter major difficulties in arranging paid leave for workers.

It seems that respondents are arguing that ILRIG should move into the "mainstream" of educational service, de-emphasise its ad hoc workshop service and develop instead a scheme of educational modules upon which workers "graduate" through different levels of education and training. ILRIG is being asked to assess the most appropriate ways of building an internationalist consciousness among workers. Respondents were clear, as mentioned above, that such an approach should be worked out in consultation with major stake-holders like COSATU and unions so that ILRIG designs appropriate courses and is sure of the support of its "base". It was felt that ILRIG should act as a catalyst in the sphere of worker education and generate education plans which could be presented to a user collective/s for discussion.

and if necessary to sacrifice the benefits of one-off workshops

3.4 PROACTIVITY & "SUSSING OUT" USER NEEDS

Respondents felt that ILRIG tended to be reactive to requests and back-seated in waiting for users to approach them. All of them felt that ILRIG should be far more proactive in marketing its service to users. This view is integrally linked to their above-mentioned proposals on ILRIG's approach to education so that the service provided is negotiated with users, premised on their needs and hence has a targeted audience. Users felt that ILRIG should be

more engaging with unions and COSATU in determining what kinds of services they could provide and that they should design courses, workshops and services in relation to these assessed needs.

Respondents also felt that this proactive approach required of ILRIG a vision of what they are doing and where they are going to i.e. a clear set of goals and objectives. These plans could obviously change in relation to objective conditions.

One of the unionists felt that ILRIG should play more of a challenging role as an outsider by providing for organisations, a reflection of their activities by which they could assess themselves.

Suggestions:

1) It was suggested that ILRIG could meet with a user group on a regular, per'haps quarterly basis, present their ideas of services they could provide as well as an evaluation of their previous quarter's service and use this presentation as a basis for discussion about its programme. In terms of identifying these users, ILRIG could speak to users both individually and collectively. This issue also relates closely to that of accountability (see below).

2) With regard to 'proactivity' it was felt that ILRIG should do more marketing of its service nationally.

3.5 THE ISSUE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Respondents differed on this point. Some argued that ILRIG was very accountable to their organisation in terms of encouraging union involvement in the planning and designing of workshops. Also, that ILRIG stuck to their mandates. Two of the respondents took this further and argued that this level of accountability is not enough and should be extended to ILRIG encouraging the development of worker leaders in their interaction with users. In other words, ILRIG should see their accountability to unions not only in terms of building democratic channels of accountability, but also in terms of emparting their skills at all possible levels of interaction with unions. A concrete suggestion made in this regard is that ILRIG insofar as possible, involve workers in the research side of workshop design and in presentations (as seems to be the idea in the "privatisation" work). Other respondents argued that it is difficult for ILRIG to do this given the ad hoc nature of their interactions with users but that such methods could be operationalised through a more systematic educational approach, thereby impacting on unions in the longer term.

another respondent felt that while ILRIG is accountable to its users on an informal basis, such accountability and democracy was formally lacking. He suggested that ILRIG submit regular quarterly reports to unions documenting its past quarters activities and any evaluation of this, and in addition outlining its plans for the following quarter. This would give unions much greater insight into ILRIG's activities, serve as a link to the union movement and create a channel for unions to engage ILRIG about its work. This suggestion goes hand in glove with those of a more proactive approach to service provision and the creation of a user collective to direct ILRIG's work.

3.6 ILRIG'S FUTURE ROLE

To summarise the above points, respondents felt that ILRIG should streamline its operation and re-orientate itself towards its internationalist focus. They also argued that ILRIG should assess user needs far more closely through surveys and setting up permanent structures of contact with users. It was recommended by all the respondents that ILRIG systematise its service and move towards a 'programatised' approach to education and training.

These comments were made in the belief that the role ILRIG plays or should play in developing an international consciousness among workers as well as a worker leadership is quite urgent. While many respondents felt that were ILRIG forced to charge for their services they would (unfortunately) not be able to use them, one respondent (of means!) argued that payment for service is desirable because it gives users more right to assert control over activities. He argued that ILRIG should determine the cost of service in conjunction with trade unions and that a subsidy scheme could be employed.

Respondents generally agreed that ILRIG could do with some "smartening up" which doesn't mean compromising its progressive nature. Smart reports which are functional are often more accessible because of layout and the range of typefaces used to denote different levels of information provided.

4. OBSERVATIONS MADE THROUGH THE INTERVIEWS

a) The interviews highlighted the fact that ILRIG seems to evaluate itself parochially in terms of what it has done and in terms of its impressions of what it should do. The interviews suggested that ILRIG should be evaluating itself and determining its future direction in the context of what is being done around worker education

in the country generally and with special regard for ILRIG's needs.

b) The respondents were saying that ILRIG lacks a vision and goals and in relation to the above point, this suggests that the organisation needs to plan in the short-, medium- and long-term. ILRIG also needs to sacrifice certain activities in order to invest more time in others and should try to devise a <u>complete</u> project in which its various facets feed off of and into each other.

c) The funding crisis probably urges serious consideration of the recommendation about the rationalisation of service. In light of this, ILRIG could hand over some of its expertise like media training to 'The Forum' and concetrate on developing other of its resources.

5. USING THIS REPORT

There has been some discussion in ILRIG about where my work fits into ILRIG's internal evaluation and we've agreed to decide on the way forward once we've looked at this report.

I've called this an interim report because it does not exhaust the research findings and because it could present a better displayed, diagrammatised account of what users seem to be wanting of ILRIG as well as possible implications of changes. It is up to ILRIG, on the basis of clarity reached through this report, to consider further discussion and presentation of the results. I would strongly favour the use of this report as an interim measure towards more substantive discussions around shaping ILRIG's service.

APPENDIX 6

ILRIG EVALUATION STUDY

INTERIM REPORT 2
10 JULY 1992

Cathy-Mae Karelse

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION
2. BRIEF REPORT ON COSATU INTERVIEWS
3. THE EIGHT ISSUES
4. CONCLUSION

1. INTRODUCTION

At our 15 June meeting which addressed '**Interim Report 1**', the following areas were identified for further discussion:

1) international news dissemination.
2) forming an ILRIG user group
3) rationalisation of service
4) books and Workers' World
5) **form** in which education is offered (modular approach)
6) **content** of educational work (media training)
7) **style** of provision (ILRIG's proactivity, acountability, and "professionalisation" of service)
8) ILRIG's geographical scope and parochialism

It was agreed that the COSATU interviews which followed this meeting would not constitute a separate report but would be built into further discussions of the above points. While the COSATU interviews feed into all the above areas, they also comment on service organisations more generally. Their 'position' obviously has bearing on ILRIG and is pertinent to the study. It also provides a context within which to view the 8 issues.

An interesting observation made through the research is that the process is unfolding and opening up new possibilities. For example just as new questions were formulated for the COSATU comrades, so we can adapt the coming interviews - 3 of which will be with users and 5 with non-users - to ILRIG's emerging interests and needs. We could be far more probing of Workers' College people on the question of ILRIG emparting skills for instance, than we've been with other interviewees. What this means is that if ILRIG feels confident about pursuing certain of the suggestions made thusfar through the research, we needn't only re-confirm or re-discuss these issues with future respondents. We could fo further by engaging them around implementation of decisions. For example, a strategy plan for international news dissemination could be developed partly through the research: we could ask interviewees about the types of international news they would like access to, the forms in which they would like to receive information, the regularity with which they would like to receive printouts, their interest in training one of their officials in telecommunications and becoming linked up themselves etc.

2. A BRIEF REPORT OF THE COSATU INTERVIEWS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Interviews were held with COSATU regional and national officials in the Education Departments, Tasneem Essop and Gino Govendor. Mangumsi from the International Desk was out of the country when I was in Jo'burg, and he is not expected in Cape Town in the near future. Both respondents addressed some of the 'Guiding Questions' which formed Appendix 1 of the last report. They also answered the 'Additional Questions for COSATU' which you will find attached, see Appendix 1.

As with the last interviews, these went well with both respondents expressing interest in the current user survey. They would like to see '**Interim Report 1**' as I'm sure the

other respondents would. This relates to issues of ownership of the research as well as confidentiality and is a matter/s we need to address.

Since details of the interviews will be included in the discussion of the 8 issues, this section serves merely to provide insight into the 'COSATU position' regarding service organisations.

2.2 COSATU'S COMMENTS

The COSATU comrades argued that in terms of education, they are working towards creating self-sufficiency within the Federation. Please find their "new educational approach" document attached in Appendix 2. This explains their plan and contextualises our previous discussions around the modular system. Neither of them were antagonistic towards service organisations and felt that these groups had important contributions to make in helping COSATU and other mass-based organisations achieve self-sufficiency. ILRIG could assist through processes of "twinning", 'training trainers', providing an appropriate resource base etc. It could also help to build COSATU during this process by facilitating rather than taking over completely the running of programmes (ILRIG incidentally is not being accused of this). While they argue that struggle (and COSATU's attainment of self-sufficiency) will determine the future role or existence of service organisations, they do say that in the short to medium term, they would like to see service organisations becoming trainers of trainers.

Service organisations are seen as owing their existence to mass-based organisations as it is argued that they raised their funds in the past on the basis of servicing the MDM. This issue is raised in the context of accountability with COSATU saying that service organisations should concentrate on building structures which make them far more accountable to their users (mass-based organisations) than they've been in the past. Accountability is seen by COSATU in terms of emparting skills, building organisation, so that joint programmes and projects increasingly become determined by workers and mass rather than service organisations. A concrete proposal made about how ILRIG could take forward its work and at the same time build organisation is by approaching the REF and NEF (as SACHED has done) to make known what it can offer COSATU and its affiliates.

Apparantly since the funding crisis, many service organisations have approached COSATU in an effort to make themselves appropriate and fundable. In terms of what service organisations could offer COSATU, it has said quite clearly that it is working towards developing its "new educational approach" and that services provided should fit into this approach. COSATU sees service organisations fitting into this plan at its menu stage. After workers have graduated from the '**Advanced** (level 3) **course**', they will select from a menu of courses those in which they'd like to specialise. It is at this point, after August - by which time they should have the "new approach" intact - that COSATU will gather service organisations to present to them

its education plan. It will ask service organisations if they'd like to enter into "joint ventures" with COSATU to address worker needs through various courses. In designing the 'menu courses', ILRIG would be asked to discuss content and methodology with COSATU so that the "joint venture" is not tokenistic. Based on these 'contractual relationships', COSATU will be prepared to endorse funding proposals to cover the costs for such work. This means that the Federation will not blanketly endorse ILRIG's general funding proposal (should such thing still exist). It will only support those specific proposals that cover joint ventures between itself and ILRIG. Work done by ILRIG for COSATU which is not covered by ILRIG's budget, will be paid for by COSATU.

This, in essence is the way COSATU sees ILRIG in relation to itself. The Federation is very positive about the role that ILRIG has to play in:

* developing a resource base on international worker issues;
* training trainers to perform educational functions within COSATU;
* building an international awareness among South African workers;
* entering joint ventures with COSATU and assisting it develop self-sufficiency;
* making Workers' World more accessible.

COSATU argues though, that the way in which ILRIG interacts with it is crucial - ILRIG must build worker organisations - so that the terms of the relationship are clear to both parties. With regard to the nature of this relationship, RJ has useful input on the need to build mutual respect betweenthe parties involved and the need to develop mechanisms through which the relationship can be developed.

3. THE 8 ISSUES

As noted above, these are issues identified at our last meeting. Each issue will include the respective COSATU contributions. You will find that many of the issues are inter-related and I've sometimes pre-empted later discussions by dealing with issues in greater detail early on in this section.

It's not always been possible to extract my comments from those of respondents as I've occassionally developed their arguements and it may have been inconclusive to leave their points hanging. I am aware that it would be more useful for you to be able to seperate interview findings from my observations and that this may make the report reading difficult for you. I encountered the problem of seperating my text from theirs because the purpose of the following section of the report seems two pronged:

(i) to rediscuss issues raised from the last report together with COSATU's comments, and
(ii) to look at implications of these issues or matters arising from them.

I am not suggesting that these intentions are contradictory, but that the second purpose presupposes building onto the first.

3.1 INTERNATIONAL NEW DISSEMINATION

The suggestion that we're addressing is that ILRIG provide to unions an international news service which keeps them informed on international developments in their industries, 'sister' organisations, umbrella structures, etc. Such a service is based on ILRIG's re-orienting to its international focus and, within this framework, providing to unions information they could use to build their organisations. COSATU argued that ILRIG's international focus was extremely important to the South African labour movement. They say however, that educational workshops around international issues are not a priority for unions at the moment. Instead of ILRIG generalising its service and providing what is of immediate interest to unions, COSATU argues that ILRIG should find creative and appropriate ways of conscientising workers about international developments. This position supports the 'international information dissemination' strategy, which is not strictly workshop based.

The suggestion was made in '**Interim Report 1**' (p5) that ILRIG could link up through INTERNET, accessible via UCT, to trade union federations, NGO's and other organisations to download appropriate information. A telecommunications link-up means that ILRIG will not only download information, but that it could also provide information to the network and enter international debates. The questions which ILRIG should consider in this regard are:

a) **what is it hoping to achieve through international communications?**
   If ILRIG enters international debates, how will these serve or be brought back to its users?
   How can users be encouraged to participate in these debates and, related to (c) below, how will they feed their experiences into international networks?

b) **what is the focus of the resource base it will develop?**
   There are many "green" groupings which could provide interesting information. Should ILRIG limit itself strictly to 'labour' issues? Also, current information is exciting but (depending on how it's written) could serve a short-lived function. How selective must ILRIG be about information it includes in its database?

c) **in what ways will ILRIG provide information to users?**
   * in what form will the information be provided? (the downloads or printouts can be confusing)
   * will ILRIG simply provide the information or also suggest how it could be used?
   * to whom should the information be sent?

   There are a range of questions that could be posed here. It seems that ILRIG would need to work these out in consultation with its users.

d) to what extent will the (tele-) communications skills developed through this process become either monopolised by ILRIG or incorporated into its enskilling programmes. This point obviously relates to that of content of ILRIG's work, see 3.6 below.

ILRIG's (old) GSB (new) office could only be linked up to UCT's mainframe via the Local Area Network (LAN) cable by the end of this year or early next year. On a technicality, the various LANs at UCT would feed into the UCT Wide Area Network (WAN). ILRIG could from its CH office though, with authorisation from the Dean of Sociology, link into UCT's vax or mainframe. This link would mean that for the cost of a local phone call to UCT, you could access INTERNET which is, as its name suggests, an international network via which there are gateways to other international networks like GEONET (to which many international NGO's and worker organisations are affiliated), PEACENET (coordinating many 'green' and activist groups), and EURONET.

ILRIG already has access to GEONET via WORKNET. I think that the cost here would be for a national phone call to Jo'burg which could prove quite expensive when you're still playing around and learning who you'd like to communicate with.

The coming editions of the WEEKLY MAIL should carry articles on electronic mail (e-mail). Essentially, you'd communicate with groups via mailing lists and bulletin boards, which usually operate within domains. Some of these mailing lists like "miscellaneous, activism, progressive" (of which there are printouts available) have moderators who control what passes through the network because of a 'right-wing' coup earlier. Others have other rules and codes by which they operate, some none at all.

A further suggestion:

ILRIG could also, as part of its online communications, create an electronic journal of the Workers' World publication with a view to feeding into international debates around worker struggle. You could possibly raise money by gaining international subscriptions to the journal through this channel. The idea would be to publish say 2 of the articles to generate debate, and to welcome subscriptions to either the electronic or hardcopy journal. This, in the international arena at least, goes some way to meeting COSATU's suggestion for a more "aggressive" marketing strategy of the publication which is regarded as "good, very good".

The creation of an electronic journal also does a bit about user comments ('**Interim Report 1**, p4) that ILRIG should maximise the resources invested in Workers' World.

Once ILRIG has linked into international networks and developed an idea of scope and interesting groups, it would be useful to have a 'staff development' workshop to discuss

telecommunications, its implications, potential and purpose for ILRIG.

3.2 FORMING AN ILRIG USER GROUP

This issue links in quite closely with that of accountability and proactivity dealt with in 3.7 below. The suggestion that came from unionists was that ILRIG should form a user group which could meet on a regular basis to provide direction for the organisation. The idea of a user group would:

(a) build accountability to users;
(b) ensure that the services ILRIG offers do in fact correspond to user needs;
(c) allow ILRIG's users to participate in the design of its programme;
(d) provide ILRIG with a collective forum to determine its work, so that it's not entering into a series of contracts all of which demand different resources, preparation and inputs.

The suggestion made in '**Interim Report 1**' (p5) was that meetings with users could be convened say every quarter with ILRIG presenting ideas of services they could provide as well as an evaluation of their previous quarter's work. This idea also relates to that of a quarterly report of activities keeping unions in touch with ILRIG's service.

COSATU supported the idea of closer contact with unions, which should be seen in the context of their 'increased accountability' call. They felt that it was important for ILRIG to:

a) step out of its 'Western Capism' by starting to treat unions as national and not only local structures. This has bearing on the 'user group' notion because it talks about ILRIG marketing its services on a national and not only local level. Concretely, this would mean that in marketing its 'international news dissemination' idea, ILRIG would make approaches to national and not only local union structures.

b) build both worker leaders and worker organisations. In keeping with this, they say that ILRIG should keep the COSATU offices informed (again possibly through a quarterly report) of their interactions with affiliates so that the Federation remains abreast with its affiliates' needs not only through communication with affiliates but also with ILRIG. An off-shoot of this could be that COSATU or unions request ILRIG to provide services similar to those provided to certain affiliates, to others.

c) beware of the danger of pre-empting the development of COSATU's self-sufficiency by taking over education that could form part of a COSATU programme or "joint venture" (cf. 3.5 below). This position complements that of other unionists who argued that ILRIG should

design their courses in consultation with "major stake-holders like COSATU and unions" ('**Interim Report 1**', p7).

In keeping with the user group idea and the notion of modelling services on user needs, COSATU has suggested that ILRIG should constantly monitor the labour situation and keep in touch with user needs.

An observation:

Users seem to stress the importance of ILRIG marketing their service and keeping their finger on the pulse of user needs. They also speak about building accountability through channels like quarterly reports and user groups. These ideas suggest that ILRIG's internal structure should allow for one of its members (probably the coordinator) to perform the function of "public relations" which includes marketing, monitoring, coordination, fund-raising, in a full-time capacity. All users have argued that marketing is a crucial part of ILRIG's operation. "Monitoring the situation" and liason with users, which the COSATU comrades suggest, goes hand in glove with marketing so that ILRIG does not end up advertising an out of touch service but markets - through interaction with users - services designed with them in relation to their needs.

To avoid indispensibility of one or two ILRIG members, 'twinning' could be used for a period to allow the position to rotate on maybe a two year basis within the organisation. Obviously the position is 'high-profile' and requires a particular type of person as not everybody relates to others easily, nor is everyone trainable into the position. COSATU says that the coordinator must be "approachable and worker friendly" (like RJ!).

3.3 RATIONALISATION OF SERVICE

This issue relates closely to that of the content of educational services in 3.6 below. The concern expressed by users was that ILRIG needed to re-orientate itself towards its initial international focus.

The suggestion made in '**Interim Report 1**' (p5) was that ILRIG, together with other service organisations, rationalise services provided to mass-based organisations especially in relation to training. ILRIG's presence in the Regional Development Forum (RDF) sought to reach this objective. Alana is far better placed to report on the progress made by this group with regard to the streamlining of training provision. ILRIG obviously still needs to decide how important a part of its work media training has become and whether it does indeed, as users suggest it should, want to relinquish this service (cf. 3.6 below).

3.4 BOOKS AND WORKERS' WORLD

This issue was highlighted not only because of a respondent's suggestion of returning to the "book-mode", but also because most felt that Workers' World is a good publication but that the (WsW) project requires some sort of cost-benefit evaluation. Users have also argued that Workers' World should feed into the rest of ILRIG's operation more integrally so that resources invested in it are maximised.

COSATU agrees with other unionists that workers are used to SALB and WIP and that Workers' World requires an "aggressive marketing strategy" to popularise the journal. There weren't any bright ideas in this regard but the provision of advertising space for other journals and in other journals could help. The overall marketing of ILRIG as an organisation offering various services could also be useful in popularising the publication. The suggestion made above in 3.1 about the publication doubling up as an electronic journal which could trigger debates that would feed into future editions, helps with international marketing but not necessarily with local popularisation.

What ILRIG needs to consider in light of Workers' World being a different medium to books, is how the journal can best serve workers, how to market it, and how to use the work invested in its production in other services provided. It also should consider the "cost-benefit" analysis that users have suggested.

3.5 THE FORM OF EDUCATION

There was a strong suggestion from unionists that ILRIG mimic COSATU's modular approach by offering graded levels of courses to workers. COSATU comrades feel that this would be incorrect. They feel that such an approach should only be adopted if it feeds into and doesn't compete with the COSATU programme. It would only be possible to negotiate such a complementary programme once COSATU's plan is in place i.e. post August. However, even then, with COSATU working towards self-sufficiency and institutionalisation - where they have coordinated 'control' over education provision - it would be more correct for ILRIG to run such a programme under COSATU's auspices or as a "joint venture". ILRIG shouldn't pre-empt COSATU's programmes or hinder its objective of self-sufficiency.

There was another suggestion about ILRIG moving beyond 'ad hoc' type provision towards a more systematic approach to educational work. COSATU is in agreement with the tendency towards consistency but argues that ILRIG should not limit itself to the provision of service only through workshops, especially since, as argued above, an 'international focus' is not a priority for unions. They feel that ILRIG has a crucial role to play in developing creative material and resources that workers find accessible. ILRIG's current packs are a bit thick and aimed more at facilitators (which isn't entirely bad). What COSATU is saying is that when producing materials or packs, ILRIG should assess who their audience is with each production. It may be possible to

produce different resources/packs along the same theme for different audiences.

The form of education also relates to 'nationalisation' of ILRIG. It may be easier to reach a national constituency through mediums other than workshops. However, stressing the importance of ILRIG extending its educational services beyond just workshops should not downplay the role that ILRIG can play in providing workshops or courses on international matters.

An important point here is that COSATU is arguing that affiliates' needs differ to those of the Federation's at the moment. Affiliates needs have not changed drastrically, whereas COSATU aims to overcome the problem of the wastage of resources and to build self-sufficiency. They are saying that ILRIG should continue servicing unions in accordance with their needs but that it should build worker organisation in the process by liasing with COSATU about what is happening in its affiliates. Perhaps what the current "dislocation" between affiliate needs and COSATU's priorities does point to is the need for ILRIG to consider an "interim" period in which it, through setting up a user group of COSATU and affiliates, addresses both sets of needs until such time as COSATU is further along the road to self-sufficiency.

3.6 THE CONTENT OF ILRIG'S SERVICES

This issue relates in part to rationalisation of service with regard to the continuation of media training (see 3.2 above). What this section also highlights is the need for ILRIG to define its **focus**.

While all respondents have thusfar expressed the need for ILRIG to re-focus and streamline its activities, they've also said that ILRIG must empart all skills involved in its service - the notion of twinning. There appears to be a contradiction here between focus on the once hand, and content of service on the other. The process of twinning and increasing accountability to the labour movement by involving workers in all stages of service production means that ILRIG could become general and move away from its specific focus. On the other hand, if the process of enskilling is always linked to the provision of a service with an international focus, twinning etc may not detract from ILRIG's re-orientation.

ILRIG should address what **kinds** of service fall within and outside of the scope of 'international labour'. What also becomes important to decide is whether ILRIG should take on the provision of services which are needed but not provided elsewhere. Perhaps its more correct for a permanent RDF-type structure to assess the need and the most appropriate provider. In this event, ILRIG could empart its skills to the selected providers through a training trainers programme.

I'm not sure of the extent to which ILRIG taking on board the emparting of telecommunications skills (in the absence of anybody else fulfilling this function) would conflict with its 'international focus'. But what ILRIG should address is the way in which it offers courses so that its service shifts from 'ad hoc' provision towards 'consistency'.

3.7 THE STYLE OF SERVICE PROVISION

The issues here are the degree of proactivity, measures of accountability and "professionalisation" of service.

With regard to proactivity, COSATU argues that it is quite important for ILRIG to couple this with a process of building accountability. Service organisations are independent of the labour movement which make them dangerous because unions don't "own" their ideas. They could be interventionist or opportunistic in their relationships with unions and completely unaccountable to worker structures. While it is correct for ILRIG to become more proactive in keeping with a consistent approach to service provision, they must do so with a view to building rather than dictating to organisations.

Accountability is obviously a merky area because there are different levels and degrees of accountability. Respondents have concretised their notion of accountability through suggestions of 'twinning', the user group, the quarterly report. To these COSATU has added the 'joint ventures' approach as well as that of assisting the Federation build self-sufficiency. The channels through which accountability occurs obviously depend on the setting but the various types of structures (a board, directorate, user committee) could determine the degree to which users 'control' a service organisation.

The issue of accountability raises (as RJ discussed with me recently) the question of to whom ILRIG is accountable, workers in organisations, officials in organisations or the trade union with its possible tensions. If organisations are democratic and officials democratically elected, ILRIG's role is probably to strengthen and respect structures of communication within organisation. However this issue requires some consideration as the codes according to which ILRIG, unions and COSATU relate to each other must be developed and set in place.

"Proffessionalisation" of service, in the way respondents have spoken about it, relates to:

(a) 'aggressive' marketing,
(b) the production of accessible, neatly packaged resources,
(c) making the organisation function efficiently without losing its flavour of democracy,
(d) considering the costing of some services.

COSATU generally supported the unions urge to smarten up ILRIG's image but again, saw this as integrally linked to the organisation pulling closer to the Federation and its affiliates.

3.8 'NATIONALISATION' OF ILRIG

This report already contains a motivation for ILRIG to move beyond the boundries of the Western Cape in marketing its service and defining its audience. COSATU was in full agreement with the other respondents that ILRIG is very insular in terms of its operation. In the past it has responded to national (and international - Namibia) requests for services but hasn't actively sought such requests. Nor has ILRIG tried to shape its service according to national needs. Expansion of its geographical scope is very much related to marketing its service and is necessary so that ILRIG models itself on national rather than only local 'needs' as these apparantly do vary.

Transcending parochialism means too that ILRIG could step out of the "Western Cape politics" syndrome which may not be alive and kicking, but which certainly has a virulent history.

4 CONCLUSION

There are matters arising from this report which we need to deal with aside from our discussion of section 3. These again relate to our working relationship, ownership of the research and the way forward. May I suggest that we deal with these once we've discussed the substantial part of this report i.e. section 3.

A proposed agenda for this meeting would be:

1. Discussion of the report generally.
2. Section 3.
3. Access to 'Interim Report 1', at this stage.
4. ILRIG's response to my letter, please see Appendix 3.
5. Moving forward & time-frames.

APPENDIX 7
PROPOSED INVESTIGATION OF AN ERIP STUDY

Cathy-Mae Karelse

9 March 1992

Guiding Interview Questions

The purpose of these interviews is to investigate how the breakdown in communication between ERIP and myself occurred. This 'breakdown' has resulted in the negotiation of a new research plan, viz. an investigation into the collapse of the initially proposed evaluation study of ERIP with a view to identifying the methodological difficulties of evaluative research design. The idea of the re-orientation of the research is based on the concept of "reflexivity" whereby the research 'goes with the flow' and follows the skewed research path rather than adhere to the formerly negotiated research plan. The case - ERIP in this instance - becomes treated as a failed study and the reasons for the failure are investigated.

It is believed that the interviews will produce findings of benefit to other researchers and service organisations in their efforts to negotiate 'research contracts'.

1. How did you come to know about my interest in working with ERIP?

2. What did you understand by my proposed evaluation study of ERIP?

3. Do you think the content of the proposal made for a feasible study?

4. How would you describe the history of our working relationship?

5. What were the weaknesses in our system of communication?

6. What problems were there in the way I handled communication with ERIP?

7. What problems were there from ERIP's side with regard to communication?

8. What were the strong points of the communication process?

9. What did you like about our interaction?

10. Have you disliked anything about our relationship?

11. How, in your opinion, did the evaluation study break down?

12. How could we have avoided the 'breakdown'?

13. How could I have improved communication with ERIP?

14. How could ERIP have improved their communication with me?

15. Do you think that the research as planned at the outset should have continued?

16. How useful do you think this modified investigation is?

17. What recommendations would you make for future relations between researchers and service organisations insofar as they are engaged in evaluation studies?

18. Are there any significant factors which we haven't explored which in your

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APPENDIX 8(i)

18 July 1995

To whom it may concern

The International Labour Resource and Information Group (ILRIG) has examined the masters thesis submitted by Cathy-Mae Karelse. ILRIG is content that the thesis accurately reflects the discussions held with Cathy-Mae, and provides an analysis which is very useful to the future development of our work.

We would like to thank Cathy-Mae for all her effort, and wish her success in her future studies and work.

Yours faithfully

ALANA DAVE
ILRIG DIRECTOR

APPENDIX 8 (ii)

University of the Western Cape

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17 JULY 1995

Attention: Ms. Cathy Karelse

Dear Cathy
Thank you for affording us the opportunity to read your Master's Thesis.

ERIP does not wish to amend anything in the document. We would like to request a copy of your final document which we believe could be usefully added to our resource centre collection.

We wish you success in your work.

Yours Sincerely

Virginia

Virginia Engel
Director

Post-it Fax Pad 7551	Page: 1 of
To: Cathy Karelse	From: VIRGINIA.
Co.	Co. ERIP.
Dept.	Phone No. 959213 2.
Fax No. 6503489	Fax No. 959 2536.

E.R.I.P.

TOTAL P.01

APPENDIX 8 (iii)

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7 July 1995

Ms. Cathy - Mae Karelse

JCT

Dear Cathy

Because of limited time I skimmed through Chapter five of your work.

However, I found it particularly interesting to read about the "failed case" scenario in respect of your work with ERIP and found myself reflecting on probable reasons for the difficulties you encountered.

I cannot claim to have an academic understanding of your field of study and value your analysis. Could you make especially the section relating to ERIP available for our Resource Centre.

I believe that our staff members including myself would appreciate reading it and learning from it when we are less time pressured.

I wish you success in your studies and thank you for the opportunity to read your work.

With Best Wishes

Virginia Engel.

Virginia Engel
Director

E.R.I.P.

APPENDIX 9 (i)

FIRST INTERVIEW WITH ILRIG (RICHARD)

1 What is ILRIG's role?

2 What are you working towards. I.O.W. what are you hoping to achieve with your work?

3 What are the functions or sub-projects within ILRIG's operations?

4 What kinds of services do you provide?

5 What are the channels through which you work, i.e. your methods of empowering users?

6 Do you provide and design services only in response to requests OR do you also offer standing skilling services?

7 Who are your targeted users? Who uses your services?

8 How do you relate to users? How do you identify their needs? Do you do any 'follow-up' work with them?

9 In terms of your understanding of your user needs, are there additional services you's like to offer? If so, what and what has stopped you from doing so?

10 Would you describe your work as reactive or proactive or both? Should it be more of either?

11 Does ILRIG encourage team work?

12 Do you have staff E&T programmes?

13 To whom is ILRIG accountable?

14 How do you evaluate your work? Do you find this effective?

I.O.W. are you able to fulfill all your responsibilities?

6 Are there more things you'd like to do that fall within your job description? Are there any constraints other than time that prevent you from doing these?

7 How do you, through your portfolio or otherwise, relate to ILRIG users and determine their needs? Do you find this method(s) satisfactory? Is ILRIG's work generally and yours specifically, sufficiently proactive in terms of taking services to users?

8 Do you think that ILRIG provides its services adequately? Are the present methods of servicing users such as workshops, publications, training sessions effective?

9 Are your current evaluation methods adequate and effective? Are the plans that emanate from these sessions feasible? Does the evaluation help you assess and plan your work effectively?

10 Do you feel that ILRIG functions as a collective? Do you feel that you, and others, get sufficient support in doing your/their work? Do you feel that there is sufficient constructive criticism and self-criticism within the project?

11 Do you think that ILRIG is accountable to its users or those it aims to service?

****

A few additional comments:

These interviews will take us to the end of November. I would like to arrange a meeting with the full ILRIG staff in early February when I resume work. At this meeting I hope to present you with concrete proposals for the continuation of the evaluation based on findings from the interviews. The rest of the fieldwork - which should last until the end of May - would probably take the form of user and non-user surveys; observation of your work; studying your documentary materials and feedback discussions where these are appropriate.

The ERIP evaluation is happening in parallel to yours, although at this point, theirs is probably two weeks ahead. Should any reason for cooperation emerge, the idea will be mooted.

Thank you for your cooperation,
Cathy-Mae.

APPENDIX 9 (iii)
ILRIG EVALUATION STUDY

USER INTERVIEWS
INTERVIEW GUIDE

A] INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

1) What work has ILRIG done for you?

2) Why did you approach ILRIG?

B] YOUR IMPRESSIONS OF ILRIG:

3) What is your understanding of ILRIG's role?

4) What is your view on the importance of ILRIG's work?

5) How effective do you think ILRIG is in carrying out this role?

6) What are ILRIG's strengths?

7) What are ILRIG's weaknesses?

C] ILRIG AND YOUR EDUCATION NEEDS:

8) Have your organisations' education needs changed in this current political period?
If so, how?

9) Could you explain why these changes have occured?

10) What new education needs does your organisation have, if any?

11) What kinds of education needs does your organisation have which ILRIG can address?

D] ILRIG's SERVICE IN RELATION TO YOUR EDUCATION NEEDS:

12) How well does the service ILRIG provides correspond to your educational needs?

13) In terms of your educational needs, do you experience any problems with ILRIG's service? I.O.W. are there inadequacies in ILRIG's service?
If so, please explain these.

14) How could ILRIG improve the service they provide to you?

15) If ILRIG were to charge for their services would you still use them?

E] YOUR WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH ILRIG:

16) Has the relationship between ILRIG and your organisation been a democratic and accountable one?
What do you understand by accountability?

17) Has ILRIG tried to be accountable to your organisation?
Could you explain this?
Does ILRIG involve your organisation in designing workshops?
Does this involvement make a longer term contribution to your organisation?
Does ILRIG in fact do what they say they'll do (I.O.W. do they honour collectively devised plans)?

18) Have their been weaknesses from ILRIG's side in terms of their accountability to your organisation?
If any, could you expand on these?

19) How could ILRIG improve the ways in which they make themselves accountable to organisations who use them?

20) Could you describe the channels and processes through which ILRIG interacts with you as a user?
Are these effective?

21) Does ILRIG let your organisation know what it can offer them?

22) How do you relate to ILRIG from your organisation?

23) What are the strengths of your relationship with ILRIG?

24) What are the weaknesses of your relationship with ILRIG?

25) How could they improve the ways in which they relate to their users?

F] ILRIG's FUTURE ROLE:

26) What recommendations could you make about ILRIG's future role?

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Cathy-Mae Karelse. May 1992.

APPENDIX 9 (IV)
ILRIG EVALUATION STUDY

Cathy-Mae Karelse
18 June 1992

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR COSATU

1. What is COSATU's perspective on "institutionalisation" of education within COSATU?

2. How does COSATU see the role of service organisations in the immediate and medium to long-term context.
   How does COSATU see ILRIG's role specifically?

3. To what extent does COSATU in the regions base its programmes on affiliates needs? What is the connection between the specific form and content of education COSATU sees itself taking forward in relation to affiliates needs?
   At what level should ILRIG be working in relation to the different educational processes?

4. How proactive should ILRIG be, or, should they simply be available to be called upon?

5. In COSATU's long-term vision, would they be employing more of their own educators?
   Would this process declare ILRIG and other service organisations redundant?

6. How does ILRIG fit into the NENF in terms of training and advice?

APPENDIX 9 (V)
ILRIG EVALUATION STUDY

POTENTIAL USER INTERVIEWS
INTERVIEW GUIDE

A] INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS:

1) Have you heard of ILRIG?

2) What do you know about ILRIG?

3) Have they approached you to offer their services?

4) Do you make use of ILRIG?

5) Why do you not make use of ILRIG?

B] APPROPRIATENESS OF ILRIG SERVICE:

6) Following Q5, I'd like to explore reasons why organisations don't use ILRIG's services.

C] IMPRESSIONS:

7) What is your understanding of ILRIG's role?

8) From your perspective, is this an appropriate role?

9) What are ILRIG's strengths?

10) What are its weaknesses?

D] USER NEEDS:

11) What organisational needs do you have which ILRIG could address?

12) Have these needs arisen since 1990 or are they longstanding?

E] WORKING RELATIONSHIP & ACCOUNTABILITY:

13) How should ILRIG go about offering their services to users?

14) How could ILRIG make themselves most accountable to their users?

F] FUTURE ROLE:

15) How do you see ILRIG's future role?

16) Do you feel that the scope of its work should be broadened in order to meet changing needs?

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Cathy-Mae Karelse
15 September 1992

APPENDIX 9 (vi)

INITIAL MEETINGS WITH ERIP CO-ORDINATORS

Dear co-ordinators

At my last meeting with ERIP members (Tracy and Jean) on 27 September, your project collective re-commited itself to undergoing an evaluation. We agreed that the best way to proceed with the study, is for me to achieve a clearer understanding of ERIP, its nature, work, operations, scope etc. It seems that the most practical way of arriving at this objective is through initial interview sessions or meetings with you, the coordinators.

My intention at these meetings with you, as you will hear from Tracy and Jean's report back, is to familiarise myself with your sub-project's work. By piecing together the findings from these interviews, I should gain a general understanding of ERIP which will help guide the evaluation research.

The kinds of issues I'd like us to discuss are more or less covered by the questions below. It would be useful if you could consider these before we meet so that additional issues that should be addressed can be identified. Each interview will probably last for 1 - 2 hours.

1 Do you have any structure within your sub-project?

2 How do you relate to the broader structure?

3 What is your sub-project's role?

4 What is your particular role? and that of other sub-project workers?

5 What are you working towards?

6 Does your sub-project encourage team work?

7 Do you have staff education and training programmes?

8 Who uses your services?

9 Do you only provide services in response to requests or do you also offer users standing services such as skills training courses?

10 How do you relate to users and identify their needs?

11 What are your methods of work I.O.W. through what means do you provide your service?

12 Is there any additional work you'd like to do within the sub-project?

13 If yes, what is this and why are you not doing this work?

14 How do you evaluate your work?